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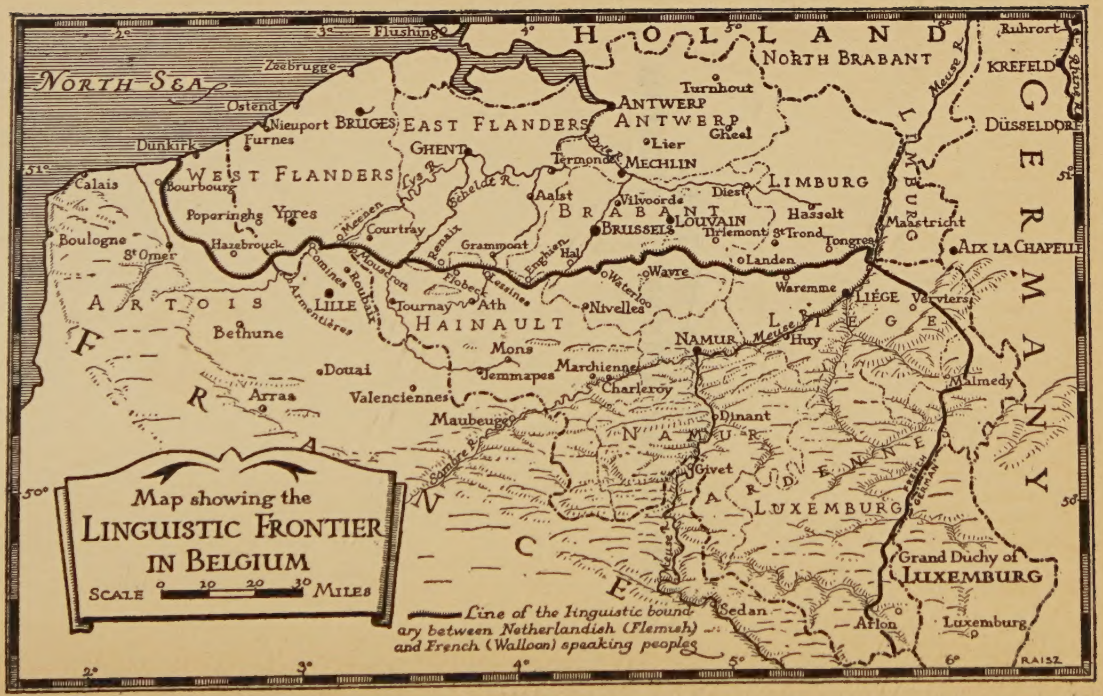
A HISTORY OF THE FLEMISH MOVEMENT IN BELGIUM


Map showing the
LINGUISTIC FRONTIER
IN BELGIUM
SCALE 0 10 20 30 MILES
Line of the linguistic boundary between Netherlandish (Flemish) and French (Walloon) speaking peoples
NORTH SEA
HOLLAND
NORTH BRABANT
EAST FLANDERS
WEST FLANDERS
ANTWERP
BRABANT
LIMBURG
LIEGE
NAMUR
HAINAULT
ARTOIS
FRANCE
LUXEMBURG
Grand Duchy of LUXEMBURG
GERMANY
Flushing
Zeebrugge
Ostend
Nieuport
BRUGES
Furnes
Dunkirk
Calais
Bourbourg
Poperinghe
Ypres
Boulogne
St Omer
Hazebrouck
Courtray
GHENT
Termonde
MECHELIN
Turnhout
Lier
Gheel
Aalst
Vilvoorde
Diest
LOUVAIN
BRUSSELS
Tirlemont
St Trond
Hasselt
Maastricht
Tongres
Aix la Chapelle
Grammont
Hal
Landen
Wavre
Waremme
LIEGE
Verviers
Nivelles
Ath
Tournay
LILLE
Roubaix
Tourcoing
Comines
Armentières
Bethune
Douai
Arras
Valenciennes
Maubeuge
Mons
Jemmapes
Marchienne
Charleroy
NAMUR
Huy
Dinant
Givet
Sedan
Malmedy
Ruhrort
KREFELD
DÜSSELDORF
Meuse R.
Rhine R.
Scheldt R.
Lys R.
Sambre R.
Ourthe R.
Semois R.
Aisne R.
Aisne Canal
Meuse R.
Aubange
Arlon
Luxemburg
RAISZ

A HISTORY OF THE FLEMISH MOVEMENT IN BELGIUM

A Study in Nationalism

By

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PREFACE

In writing this history of the Flemish movement I have attempted to describe the growth of national sentiment among the Flemish speaking people of Belgium and thus to explain a national movement that is little known, and much less understood, outside the Low Countries. In undertaking this task I have tried to maintain a strict impartiality. Some readers of the following pages may insist that I have voiced my approval of the Flemish extremist view in applying the word "national" to the movement. This implication would be, however, entirely gratuitous; the adjective "national" has been employed simply because the Flemish movement seems to have much in common with other well-recognized, national movements. Other readers are likely to insist that the Flemish movement should have been called a "linguistic" rather than a "national" movement. With such critics I have no quarrel; I am more interested in accurate description than in terminology. It is impossible to satisfy all partisans in matters as delicate as the Flemish question and no attempt has been made to do so. My purpose has been to seek the truth and to register it as accurately as possible.

A large portion of the time devoted to the preparation of the present volume was spent in Belgium. During my stay there I came in contact with persons of all political convictions and of various views regarding the

Flemish movement. To my many Belgium friends and acquaintances, too numerous to mention individually here, I am greatly indebted for information, suggestions, and criticisms. I also owe much to persons in the Royal Library and Archives of the War at Brussels and in the libraries of Antwerp and Ghent for their faithful services.

The tranquility of my sojourn in Belgium was somewhat marred by over-zealous patriots. My visits to Flemish nationalists and to condemned Flemish activists in Holland in search of information brought the wrath of the patriotic Belgian press on my head and its campaign against me led to a short prison detention and to two police investigations. I mention this incident as a criterion of thoroughness and also as a proof of the impassioned attitude with which Belgians regard the Flemish movement.

I am grateful to all those who have helped me in the realization of this work; to my parents whose aid has made my education possible; to my wife whose constant interest has been a source of encouragement; to Professor C. J. H. Hayes whose inspiration and friendly guidance have been of inestimable help; and to my many other professors and friends, Professors A. J. Barnouw, G. L. van Roosbroeck, C. D. Hazen, I. W. Raymond, and J. B. Brebner of Columbia University and Harry Gideonse of Rutgers University, whose willingness to read the manuscript or proof and whose many useful suggestions have greatly improved this work.

SHEPARD B. CLOUGH.

Columbia University, 1930.

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A HISTORY OF THE FLEMISH MOVEMENT IN BELGIUM

CHAPTER I

Introduction: A Sketch of Flemish History to 1815

The Flemish Movement Defined

One of the most remarkable phenomena of modern times has been the awakening of linguistic groups to a consciousness of cultural national unity, accompanied by a tendency for such groups to aspire to political autonomy as national states. For example, there was in nineteenth-century Italy a linguistic-cultural-political revival, a *risorgimento,* which resulted in the unification of almost all Italians in one nation, those still outside the national pale being considered "unredeemed." Similarly, in the multi-lingual Austro-Hungarian Monarchy of the nineteenth century literary revivals contributed to national movements among the Magyars, Serbs, Croats, and Czechs and have recently led to the establishment of national states for these peoples. Similar developments took place in both Finland and Poland. In like manner the Norwegians have experienced a linguistic regeneration and in order that their language may be a little more distinctive they are now busily engaged in establishing the *landsmaal* of the peasants as the cultural language of Norway. The Irish, although they have obtained political autonomy without any extensive linguistic revival, are now bent on extending and intensifying the use of Gaelic. The

Great War of the twentieth century brought with it an efflorescence of linguistic movements and its conclusion has witnessed the creation of several new states based on the principle of linguistic unity.

There are several reasons why language took on an especial importance in the nineteenth century. During the romantic period littérateurs, philologists, and philosophers began to study and use the idioms of the common people. The picturesque expressiveness of these vulgar tongues appealed to the intellectuals of the time who had become tired of the stilted practices of the eighteenth century. In many cases tacit approval of these tongues developed into ardent enthusiasm for them and one finds among romanticists of every nation an extraordinary glorification of popular language. In addition to this conscious effort to confer a new importance on those languages which hitherto had been considered vulgar and uncouth, other forces were at work contributing to the same end. Among the most important of these was the growth of democratic ideas. Democracy gave the "people" who spoke common tongues a new rôle in political life and the people in turn demanded the use of their language in all public institutions—courts, legislative assemblies, schools, and administrative services. Then too, the easy means of transportation and communication, which resulted from the inventions of the industrial revolution, brought peoples into closer contact with one another than ever before, thus accentuating linguistic differences.

Linguistic fervor has characterized little groups and small states as much if not more than large ones. And among others the miniature state of Belgium has been

affected. In that state part of the population speaks Dutch, or Dutch dialects known as Flemish,[1] and the other part speaks French, or a Romance dialect known as Walloon. During the nineteenth century a linguistic rivalry developed between these two groups, a rivalry which was owing partly to an attempt of the French-speaking elements to make French the predominant language in the Belgian state and partly to the reawakening among Flemings of a pride in their language, history, and culture. The history of the Flemish movement is primarily a study of the growth of this pride, but before entering directly upon its consideration let us glance at the historical background of the linguistic relations between Walloons and Flemings in order that we may better understand the situation as it was about 1830.

The Formation of the Linguistic Frontier

The linguistic frontier between Flemings and Walloons was created very early in the history of the Low Countries; it dates from the barbarian invasions of the early Middle Ages. In the third century the Salian Franks began to filter through the Roman cordon and establish themselves within the Empire. In the fifth century this movement was accelerated when Rome, threatened by the invasion of the Goths, recalled her legions from the north, thus leaving the way open to

[1] The Dutch people call their language *Nederlandsch,* which is usually translated into English as "Netherlandish." This word will be used in the present study to designate the Low German language of the Flemish provinces of Belgium and the Kingdom of the Netherlands and hence will be employed synonymously with "Dutch."

the Franks. The latter took advantage of the opportunity, crossed the Rhine, and settled the intervening territory as far south as a line running roughly from Maestricht straight across what is now Belgium, passing to the south of Brussels and Lille, and reaching the North Sea near Boulogne.[2] This district was sparsely inhabited by a people among whom the Latin language and Latin culture had not become firmly rooted. For these reasons the invaders were able to maintain their customs and, what is more important for our study, their Low German tongue. In this way by the sixth century the "Netherlandish" people became established in the territory contained in a sort of triangle formed by lines running from a little beyond the Zuyder Zee on the north, to Boulogne on the south, and to Cologne on the east—a linguistic unit which has remained intact to the present day, but which, as we shall see later, did not develop into an independent national state.

It seems strange at first thought that the Franks should have stopped in the midst of a level plain. No mountain range or any river coincides with this boundary. Historians do not agree in their explanation of this phenomenon. It was long thought that the *Carbonaria Silva* impeded the advance of the tribes from the north. Godefroid Kurth in his *La Frontière Linguistique en Belgique*[3] went into detail to substantiate this theory, an opinion which was adopted by the Belgian historian, Henri Pirenne.[4] Additional research

[2] Henri Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique*. Brussels: Lamertin. Third edition. 1909. v. I, p. 16.

See map, frontispiece.

[3] Brussels: Société Belge de Librairie. 1896. p. 545.

[4] *Histoire de Belgique*. v. I, p. 16.

has led other scholars to maintain that the *Carbonaria Silva* ran north and south and hence at right angles to the linguistic frontier,[5] and to suggest that Roman fortifications along the road from Cologne to Boulogne kept the Franks from colonizing south of the present linguistic boundary.[6]

Of course many Franks, organized in military bands under such leaders as Clovis, went much further south than this line and ultimately conquered Gaul. But Gaul was, comparatively speaking, densely populated and its inhabitants had become Latinized. Hence the invaders of Gaul, although they gave their name to the country (France; land of the Franks), were engulfed by a people of superior numbers and of superior civilization. Therefore the Franks in Gaul adopted the religion, customs, and language of the natives. In time Latin developed into a tongue known as French (the language of the Franks), which was spoken from the Mediterranean to the line Boulogne-Maestricht, the limit of dense Frankish colonization. Thus was established a boundary over which two linguistic groups have faced each other for about 1,400 years, neither one having given way appreciably to the other.[7] And so in present-

[5] H. Vander Linden, "La Forêt Charbonnière," *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire.* April, 1923. pp. 203-215.

[6] H. Van Houtte, "L'Origine de la frontière linguistique en Belgique," *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire.* v. III. 1924. pp. 116-119.

See also G. Des Marez, *Le problème de la colonisation franque et du régime agraire en Belgique.* Brussels: Hayez. 1926.

[7] This does not hold true for French Flanders. There the linguistic boundary has been moved northward until today it reaches from Dunkirk to Hazebrouck and enters Belgium south of Ypres. See the map in Godefroid Kurth, *La frontière linguistique, loc. cit.*

	French only	Flemish only	German only	French & Flemish	French & German	Flemish & German	3 languages	None of three
Antwerp ..	7,957	477,570	2,286	49,283	721	746	2,845	891
Brabant ...	260,589	501,670	4,250	153,436	4,723	639	4,793	3,493
West Flanders ..	24,874	553,609	132	76,595	149	139	606	739
East Flanders ..	8,541	749,050	264	77,313	272	227	1,166	306
Hainault ..	889,478	13,836	443	23,804	1,587	65	1,634	353
Liége	556,397	20,216	14,068	22,054	14,919	440	1,269	254
Limburg ..	10,513	168,573	234	18,605	298	634	744	154
Luxemburg	168,128	416	17,698	500	11,824	20	105	117
Namur ...	303,839	444	175	2,162	757	46	169	102

Annuaire Statistique de la Belgique et du Congo Belge. 45e année 1914, pp. 82-87, Brussels: Lesigne. 1920.

day Belgium the provinces of Antwerp, West Flanders, East Flanders, Limburg, and the arrondissements of Louvain and Brussels in the province of Brabant are Flemish-speaking, while the provinces of Hainault, Luxemburg, Namur, Liége, and the arrondissement of Nivelles in Brabant are French-speaking. To the south, the French language holds almost undisputed sway; to the north, Netherlandish is the common language except in the cities where there are linguistic groups of French-speaking people,[8] who are usually of the upper middle class.

The Linguistic Situation in Flanders during the Middle Ages

In the early centuries after the Frankish invasions the question of language did not prove to be an important problem. In the lower levels of civilization man ordinarily thinks little more of the language he speaks than the dog does of its bark, or the bird of its song. There is just enough of a linguistic consciousness to recognize when the bark, or the song, or the language of another is different. But there is no worship of language. This was the general situation in the early Middle Ages. No attempt was made in the treaty of Verdun in 843, when the empire of Charlemagne was partitioned, to have the political boundaries follow linguistic frontiers. The same may be said of the division of Lotharingia in 870 between Louis the German and Charles the Bald. Latin was the customary official language and the common people had no special need to understand the political documents which

[8] Notably at Brussels.

were written in it. But with the development of civilization and the increased use and importance of vernacular languages the situation was considerably altered.

The French language began to acquire prestige between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries on account of the literature which was being produced in it. This was the period of the *Chanson de Roland* and the songs of the *trouvères,* works which were admired in the greater part of civilized Europe.[9] The French language radiated with French literature and made some impression on the descendants of the Franks who lived just north of the French-Netherlandish linguistic frontier. These people, the Flemings, had been divided into little feudal states, the most important of which were the County of Flanders, the Duchy of Brabant, and the Bishopric of Liége. The spread of French in the County of Flanders was facilitated by the fact that the counts owed allegiance to the kings of France and the princes were, after the twelfth century, themselves of French culture.[10] The nobility followed the example of the court, finding French more cultured than the Germanic language of the common people.[11]

In another of these feudal domains, the Duchy of Brabant, Flemish maintained its grip with much more tenacity. At Antwerp, for example, all the public acts were drawn up in that language. The same may be said of Brussels, where Latin finally gave way to the Netherlandish tongue of the people.[12] In the Bishopric

[9] G. Kurth, *op. cit.,* p. 24.

[10] Reference is made to the princes of the houses of Alsace, Hainault, and Dampierre.

[11] Kurth, *op. cit.,* pp. 25, 26.

[12] *Ibid.,* p. 32.

of Liége, the third important feudal state whose boundaries enclosed both French- and Flemish-speaking peoples, the progress of French was much more marked. Numerous documents of the fourteenth century testify to the fact that at least the official classes had been converted to its use.[13]

But there came a reaction to this process of exalting French. The thirteenth century witnessed great progress among the "popular class" of Flanders. The cloth industry brought prosperity to the country and it was natural that the improved condition of the people should be reflected in public life. By 1302 the artisans of Flanders had become so strong that they successfully fought the King of France, defeating him in the Battle of the Golden Spurs. This was not a national war between two distinct cultural units, but the victory had the effect of bringing the Flemish artisan class into its own. At a bound the Flemish language became the official tongue in the County of Flanders and it enjoyed new favors in private life. A similar phenomenon was witnessed in Brabant and Liége, although the change came much less abruptly and was much less complete.[14]

Towards the close of the fourteenth century the County of Flanders came under the rule of the French-speaking princes of the House of Burgundy. It has often been charged that they attempted to Gallicize Flanders because they adopted French for the central administration, had a French court, and insisted that

[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 35, 36.

[14] Kurth, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-46. See also Jacques des Cressonnières, *Essai sur la question des langues dans l'histoire de Belgique.* Brussels: Lamberty. 1919. *passim.*

the Flemings plead their cases in French before the Council of Flanders which was then established at Lille. The charge against the Burgundian princes is probably exaggerated. They adopted French because it was easier for them, not because they wished to obliterate Flemish. They never hesitated to use Flemish when they appealed to their subjects for aid, and when, upon the death of Philip the Bold in 1404, the Flemings demanded in return for oaths of fidelity that the Council of Flanders be located in Flemish-speaking territory and that Flemish be used in the trials before the Council and in certain administrative affairs, the new Count, John the Fearless, did not hesitate on account of linguistic scruples to grant the Flemish requests.[15]

The dukes of Burgundy dreamed of constructing a compact middle kingdom between France and Germany, and in the fifteenth century Philip the Good and Charles the Bold almost realized such a dream. They managed to establish their sway over all the territory in which Netherlandish was spoken, and a contemporary might have thought that the way had been paved for a permanent state. Charles the Bold, however, had undertaken more than he could accomplish and he fell at Nancy (1477) while endeavoring to carry out his political plans. He was followed by his daughter, Mary of Burgundy. Her political position was weak, as is indicated by the fact that upon her accession the Flemings asserted themselves and made her grant new privileges.[16] Amongst the things she promised were the ap-

[15] Kurth, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-49.

[16] See the *Grand privilège de Marie de Bourgogne* in O. Delepierre, *Annales de la Société d'Emulation de Bruges.* v. I, p. 45.

pointment of officials who could speak Flemish and the use of Flemish in acts concerning Flanders.

On the whole it is fair to say that during the Middle Ages the political affairs in the feudal states, where French and Flemish subjects lived side by side, were treated usually in both languages. When, however, a preference was shown by the feudal lords for one language or the other, the linguistic group whose language had been neglected demanded a rectification.

The extent to which the one language or the other was used in private life at this time is not easy to ascertain. There is a divergence of opinion among modern Belgian historians regarding the point. A veritable battle has been waged by those who today cherish the French language and those who cherish the Flemish.[17] The former maintain that the upper classes were bi-lingual and for cultural purposes preferred French. The latter contend that Flemish remained the chief means of expression for the "Flemish soul." The truth of the matter probably lies in a mean between these opposite extremes. That French was used by some of

[17] One should compare the following works:

G. Kurth, *La frontière linguistique en Belgique.*

H. Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique.*

L. Willems, "Prof. H. Pirenne over onze Middelnederlandsche letterkunde," *De Vlaamsche Gids.* 1907.

J. des Cressonières, *Essai sur la question des langues dans l'histoire de la Belgique.* Brussels, 1919.

H. de Hoon, "De l' emploi des langues en Belgique," *Revue de l'Université de Bruxelles.* 1910.

M. Wilmotte, *La culture française en Belgique.* Paris, 1912.

D. A. Stracke, *Was Vlaanderen altyd tweetalig als nu?* Ghent, 1913.

A. Vermeylen, *La question des langues en Belgique.* Brussels: Le Peuple. 1919.

the bourgeoisie is undeniable, but it never succeeded completely in supplanting Flemish and it never became the language of the masses. But it is well to add that at no time did rival languages become the standards around which two camps rallied. In the decentralized states of medieval times linguistic problems were of minor importance.

Spanish and Austrian Domination, 1477-1792

The death of Charles the Bold in 1477 was of great importance in the history of the Low Countries. In the first place, it presaged the failure of the Burgundian princes to create a middle kingdom. Secondly, it left Charles's unmarried daughter, Mary, in possession of all the Burgundian holdings, thus making her a very desirable heiress. So desirable was she, in fact, that the year of Charles's death had not elapsed before Mary celebrated her marriage to the Hapsburg Maximilian I, Holy Roman Emperor. This marriage united the destinies of the Low Countries with those of the cumbersome Empire, a union which was to prove full of vicissitudes for the Netherlands. At first, however, things went well. During the reign of Charles V, grandson of Mary of Burgundy and Maximilian, the Netherlandish provinces were content with their lot. Charles V was particularly fond of this part of his Empire, and in 1548 by the Transaction of Augsburg he united the provinces into one political federation, an Imperial Circle. In time Charles broke under the strain of ruling his far-flung Empire, and in 1555 he abdicated in favor of his brother Ferdinand and his son Philip, dividing his possessions between them. It fell

to the lot of the latter to obtain as important parts of his domain Spain and the Netherlands.

Philip had been reared in Spain and as monarch of that country he proved very popular. In the Low Countries, on the other hand, he was looked upon as a foreigner and failed in his attempt to govern this part of his possessions. His heavy taxes antagonized the bourgeoisie; his desire to centralize the government at the expense of the much cherished autonomy of the cities awoke local patriotisms; and his attempt to exterminate the fast spreading Calvinist doctrines by means of the Inquisition aroused the hostility of the Protestants. His perseverance in these measures caused the Netherlandish provinces to unite for common defense. By the Pacification of Ghent (1576) they agreed to oppose the Spanish king until he abolished the Inquisition and returned their former liberties, and by the Union of Brussels (1577) they organized a central government for action against their sovereign. Philip II met these acts by attempting more vigorously to put down the revolt. His cause was aided by dissension in the camp of his opponents. Each province was jealous of the power of its neighbor; each complained of the taxes which were collected for continuing the war; and religious differences cropped up between the Catholic sections of the South and the Calvinist provinces of the North. So, when Philip offered to change his policy of force, many of the Walloon and a few of the Flemish cities thought that they were justified under the terms of the Pacification of Ghent to make peace with Spain. This they did by the Treaty of Arras in 1579. Most of the Dutch-speaking provinces, however, remained hostile to Philip and joined

the Union of Utrecht (1579) for the purpose of continuing the struggle against him. In this Union were included the Flemish cities of Antwerp, Lier, Ypres, Bruges, and the Freedom of Bruges, municipalities which were later to be incorporated in the state of Belgium. If the self-determination of peoples had been respected at that time, the Treaty of Arras and the Union of Utrecht might have formed the basis of two separate states. If this had been done, the Low Countries would have been divided with but few exceptions along linguistic lines.[18]

But Philip was unwilling to leave matters thus. Arms were resorted to in a struggle that continued intermittently until the end of the Thirty Years' War (1648). During the course of this long conflict the fortunes of war fluctuated back and forth, but as the fight wore on it became apparent that Spain could maintain its sway over only the ten Southern provinces. The seven northern provinces offered a stubborn resistance and having declared themselves free and independent from Spain in 1581 were able to obtain formal recognition of their independence by the Treaty of Westphalia (1648). The boundary established at that time between the North and the South was determined not by a geographical barrier or by a linguistic frontier or strictly according to religious sentiments, but according to military expediency and the fortunes of war. Thus it was that the Dutch-speaking people were divided into two parts, one going to form the Northern Netherlands,

[18] There seems to be an opportunity for an interesting study of the "national" motives behind the Treaty of Arras and the Union of Utrecht. See P. Geyl, "Einheit und Entzweiung in den Niederlanden" in the *Historische Zeitschrift.* 139 (1). 1928. pp. 48-61.

the other, joined by French-speaking Walloons, going to form the Southern Netherlands. The latter, linked first to Spain and then to Austria, to whom it was given in 1714 in compensation for the Bourbon succession to the Spanish throne, had the misfortune of being buffeted by the political storms of Europe, while independent Holland developed into a powerful state of the first order.

Before tracing further the political development of the Southern Netherlands, it would be well to consider the linguistic situation in those provinces during the period of Spanish and Austrian domination. In the Burgundian and early Hapsburg period, we find that each new prince upon his accession, or, following the terminology of the Low Countries, "upon his Joyous Entry," took his oath in the Flemish language. Gradually this was supplanted by French.[19] With the Spanish period French began to be employed for correspondence between the provincial states and the central government, and French was used in acts pertaining to the whole territory as the language which was understood by all officials, although of course there were many Flemings who could not comprehend it. On the whole, however, an attempt was made to adhere to the principle that those who govern should use the language of their subjects and for local affairs this was actually done.[20]

It is a curious fact that this principle was first disregarded by a Germanic house—by the Austrian Hapsburgs. And it is still more curious that in disregarding

[19] Kurth, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

[20] Kurth, *op. cit.*, pp. 52, 53.

it the Hapsburgs did not force German or Dutch on the people, but French. During the reign of Charles VI in the first part of the eighteenth century we find that the letters of the government to the Flemish cities were written usually in French and the few exceptions entirely disappear upon the accession of Maria Theresa. These phenomena, so striking to modern eyes, can only be explained by the great favor which the French language and French culture universally enjoyed during the eighteenth century. French was fashionable. Frederick the Great's court at Berlin was under the influence of French culture and the King took great pride in his command of the French tongue. At Vienna a similar state of affairs existed. Nor were the Southern Netherlands immune from French influence. The Flemish bourgeois took pride in sending their children to France or to a Walloon city for an education and in fashioning their social life according to the latest Parisian styles. As their admiration for French increased they developed a disdain for the Flemish language and for Flemish culture. But despite these facts Flemish was still employed for official business by the provincial states and councils and by the cities of the Flemish provinces.[21]

The prestige which French enjoyed during the eighteenth century was so great that a contemporary might have thought that it would become a world language, taking the place of the already archaic Latin. But such was not to be the case, due partly, as we have remarked, to the growth of democracy and the increased importance of the languages of the common people and

[21] Kurth, pp. 57-61.

partly to a campaign in favor of various vulgar tongues.

The campaign in favor of Flemish was inaugurated by Verloy, a lawyer of Brussels. He was the first writer in Flanders [22] to attack the increased use of French and at the same time to laud the despised Flemish. In 1788, one year before the storm of revolution broke in France, he published his *Essay on the Neglect of the Mother Tongue in the Netherlands*.[23] His words might have been from the pen of a writer of the middle of the nineteenth century.

"In the Low Countries, especially in the Austrian Low Countries, we are much inferior to our neighbors in the arts and sciences. This does not require proof. Everyone is thoroughly convinced that it is impossible for a Netherlander to surpass the French in any art. This conviction is so well entrenched that nothing seems beautiful or great if it does not come from France. . . . The Flemish language is especially maltreated at Brussels. In this city it is not only neglected but also despised. Only a dialect is spoken and it is rare that one finds an intellectual who speaks Netherlandish well. The vulgar cast it off and despise it without knowing it. . . . There are those who refuse to speak Flemish in society or in the street, others who purposely speak Flemish badly in order to give the appearance of having been educated in France. . . . Never is any attention paid our language by the public authorities. The

[22] The term Flanders has come to signify the Flemish speaking provinces of Belgium. It should not be confused with the medieval County of Flanders or the modern provinces of East and West Flanders.

[23] *Verhandeling op d'onacht der Moederlyke Tael in de Nederlanden.*

University of Louvain and the Academy of Brussels have only done this much—they have never condemned it. Our orthography is not yet fixed and has not yet received that varnish of an official hand with which French is blessed. And in this matter the Dutch are not better off than we. Our language is banished from the theaters. It is pushed to the side in our most respected councils. The greater part of our songs, not to say all, nearly all our gazettes and other publications of the press are in French and the French alone gain knowledge and profit from them. Our journalists, our gazette writers, are generally the secretaries and teachers of the great." [24]

Verloy was of the opinion that the use of a foreign language by youths stunts their development and ruins any native ability they may have for literary expression and for all studies in which the use of language is important. He pointed out how the educated classes were held at a distance from the people on account of the difference of language, thus preventing new knowledge from penetrating the ranks of the masses. He even blamed such foreign influence for the decadence of the Southern Netherlands. As a remedy he proposed the use of Flemish at the court and in all sciences, the improvement of education, the standardization of the Netherlandish orthography, and a close union between Flemish and Dutch literatures. In fact, Verloy traced in broad outline the arguments which were later em-

[24] Verloy, *Verhandeling op d'onacht der moederlyke tael in de Nederlanden.* Maestricht, 1788. pp. 1, 2, 39-41.

Lamoort, a librarian of Saint Pierre at Lille, lauded the Flemish language in his *Discours sur l'utilité d'une histoire générale de Flandre et sur la manière de l'écrire.* Liége, 1760. But these cases were few.

ployed by the leaders of the Flemish movement and his suggested reforms were to constitute a part of the program of the Flemish agitators. Verloy can be called the first *Flamingant,*[25] the first person to cry: "In Flanders, Flemish."

Verloy's attack on the use of French was a cry in the wilderness; it had no apparent effect. French continued to enjoy the esteem of the bourgeoisie; the intellectual life of the Flemish-speaking provinces continued to be dictated by the modes of Paris. The place which French played in the lives of the Flemings was on the increase during the entire eighteenth century, but it took its most rapid strides forward in those years when, thanks to the conquests of the French Revolution and the military successes of Napoleon, the Belgian Netherlands were united with France.

French Domination, 1792-1815

The Austrian provinces fell under French political domination after the remarkable victory of the Revolutionary general Dumouriez at the Battle of Jemappes (November 6, 1792) and the decisive defeat administered to the allied forces at Fleurus in 1794 (June 26). France became mistress in a land where her language and culture had already found high favor among the upper classes, but where at least half of the population spoke Flemish. Despite this fact France began to treat her conquered territory as though French

[25] *Flamingant* is a French word meaning a Fleming who is conscious and proud of his language and culture. It was used in the Middle Age to distinguish that part of Flanders where Flemish was spoken, *La Flandre Flamingante,* as opposed to that section in which French was used, *La Flandre Gallicante.*

were the only language used there. The National Convention decreed in 1794 (2 Thermidor Year II) that French should be used for every public act and that if any official should take testimony, draw up a will, or seal a contract in any other language he would be removed from his position and imprisoned for six months.[26] But the Convention had overstepped the limits of practicability and had to recognize its mistake. So many complaints were made against the decree that after a few months it was revoked, the Convention suggesting that it would regulate the question of language at some future time.[27]

But the Convention was imbued with the idea that the use of French was vital to the successful administration of the conquered territories. It commissioned Abbé Grégoire to draw up a report on the subject. The report made by the patriotic Abbé is most interesting. He proposed that French be propagated everywhere—French, the language which had gained the esteem of the whole Continent.[28] He classed as *patois* (dialects) not only that group of languages which could boast of no culture and no literature, but also German and Flemish. He condemned dialects because they prevented political amalgamation and the propagation of the truth. In order to fuse people into one great and glorious whole there must be unity of lan-

[26] Decree of 2 Thermidor Year II. *Bulletin des lois de la République.* No. 25. Law no. 118.

[27] Decree of 16 Fructidor Year II. *Bulletin des lois de la République.* No. 51. Law no. 276.

[28] Abbé Grégoire, *Rapport sur la nécessité et les moyens d'anéantir les patois et d'universaliser l'usage de la langue française.* 6 Prairial Year II, p. 1.

guage. In order to arrive at the realization of such a magnificent conception Grégoire proposed that French be propagated by means of the press, the theater, and the army, and even suggested that a man be forbidden to marry unless he could read, write, and speak the national language. Such was the Convention's fervor for the French language that it accepted the report, printed it, and ordered its distribution.

Although the Convention never went to the extreme suggested by Grégoire, it did all that was possible to Gallicize the provinces which today constitute the state of Belgium. It formally united them to France the 9 Vendémiaire Year IV (October 1, 1795) and after this date all French legislation was applicable to the conquered territory. The laws were promulgated mostly in French, an exception being made for translations in those places where the people were absolutely unable to understand that language.[29] French officials were appointed to all the more important offices in the Belgian provinces in order to carry into effect the doctrines which were so profoundly changing the social life of France. They were even given employ in minor positions with the result that the administration was filled with Frenchmen from top to bottom.[30] In the Flemish sections French became the official tongue. The Minister of the Interior wrote in 1796 that "the agents of the rural communes who do not know French . . . are incapable of fulfilling their duties and ought to be replaced." [31] The influx of foreigners disgusted the

[29] 21 Vendémiaire Year IV (October 13, 1795).

[30] Pirenne, *op. cit.*, v. VI, p. 94.

[31] L. de Lanzac de Laborie, *La domination française en Belgique*. Paris, 1895. v. I, p. 331. See also Paul Verhaegen, *La Belgique sous la domination française*. Brussels: Goemaere. 1922.

natives not alone because they usurped all lucrative positions and spoke a strange tongue, but especially because they refused to attend mass on Sunday, an institution very dear to the Catholic population of Flanders.

When Napoleon became master of the destinies of France no change was made regarding the policy of Gallicizing the Belgian provinces. He made his début in this policy by decreeing that French would be the only language countenanced in public acts, although a translation might be added in the margin.[32] This law, of course, applied to the courts as well as to administrative offices and it was under this régime that the young generation of lawyers grew up in Flanders.[33] French in language and culture these were to furnish the future leaders of the "French" party in Belgium. Yet, like the National Convention, Napoleon was forced to mitigate such a stringent law and in 1812, when the Napoleonic star seemed to be losing some of its lustre, he decreed that Flemish might be used with French before the courts and for public documents.[34] But in another respect Napoleon was very severe. He allowed no newspaper to print any political views unless a French translation accompanied them in an adjoining

[32] Decree of 24 Prairial Year XI. *Bulletin des lois de la République Française.* No. 292. Law no. 2881.

[33] Previous to this decree French was widely used in civil courts. The decrees of 2 and 28 Frimaire Year IV had advised the use of French and had demanded French translations of all documents submitted in any other language. See J. des Cressonnières, *Essai sur la question des langues dans l'histoire de Belgique.* p. 342.

[34] *Bulletin des lois de l'Empire de France.* No. 456. Law no. 8440. December 22, 1812. Article 1.

column. Some of Napoleon's officials took delight in enforcing this rule to the very letter. For example, the prefect of Antwerp, Voyer d'Argenson, was one of the most ardent in suppressing Flemish periodicals.[35] At Ghent another official forced the editor of a Flemish paper to publish his journal in French, prohibited the printing of books in Flemish after 1810, and in 1812 ordered the names of all the streets and the inscriptions painted on the signs of shops to be translated into French.[36] Although this policy was not general, it indicates what the most radical French officials were ready to do for the glory of the French language.

A more efficacious method of extending the use of French was by means of schools, and the French did not hesitate to make use of them for this purpose. The National Convention voted a law requiring a very minute inspection of the schools and ordering that instruction be given in republican dogma. The Rights of Man were to take the place of the Catechism as the most important feature of these elementary schools.[37] The first attempt at regulating education in the Belgian provinces was a flat failure. The Catholic Flemish population was too faithful to its religion to see it abused, and refused, with some exceptions, to coöperate in making these schools a success.[38] The so-called *Écoles Centrales,* a sort of combination secondary school, university, and adult school, were next erected

[35] Lanzac de Laborie, *op. cit.,* v. II, p. 270.

[36] J. Van der Haeghen, *Bibliographie gantoise.* v. V, pp. 9, *et seq.*

[37] Law of 3 Brumaire Year IV (October 25, 1795). It was promulgated in the Austrian provinces in 1797.

[38] Pirenne, *op. cit.,* v. VI, p. 186.

and proved much more successful. They were a true creation of the Revolution; they breathed reform. Not the least important change was the substitution of the use of French for Latin as the medium of instruction, the latter being relegated to the place of a subject to be taught rather than of a language to be used. The *Écoles Centrales* were nominally replaced by *lycées* in 1802. They fulfilled the function of university and higher secondary school and partially filled the gap in the Belgian provinces that had been caused by the closing of the University of Louvain in 1797. Under them were erected a group of secondary schools organized by cities or by private groups, schools which were to serve as the stepping stones between elementary instruction and the *lycées*. This educational system, thoroughly French, proved a success and formed the generation which was to direct affairs in the South during the union of the Northern and Southern Netherlands. It was this generation which found the Dutch political régime so distasteful in the years after 1815.

There was really no university system under the new order of things. There were special schools such as the school of law at Brussels (founded March 25, 1807) where legal students were trained in the French language and in French law. There was also a school of letters at Brussels for training teachers (founded November 5, 1810) and private schools of medicine at Ghent and Liége. The task of administration was entrusted to two "Academies," one at Liége and one at Brussels. Their function was to insure the kind of instruction which would redound to the glory of the Emperor. Placed on the very summit of the whole structure was the Imperial University (founded May

10, 1806) which dictated the policies to be pursued throughout the entire system in all France (including Belgium).

By means of such institutions French culture and the French language became more firmly rooted than ever in the Flemish provinces. There seems to have been little reaction against this development, for French domination did not awaken among the Flemings a feeling of opposition to the invaders analogous to that displayed by the Spaniards in the Peninsular War or by the Prussians in the War of Liberation. When Napoleon fell in defeat at Waterloo, there was no pronounced movement in Flanders in favor of the Flemish language or of Flemish culture. That movement belongs to the post-Napoleonic period.

CHAPTER II

Flemings in the United Netherlands, 1815-1830

Creation of the Kingdom of the United Netherlands and Its Nationalist Foundations

With the overthrow of Napoleon Europe was faced with many delicate political problems. Boundaries had to be retraced; political organizations had to be set up in place of those which had been destroyed; and sovereigns had to be chosen from among rival claimants to the thrones of various states. In order to settle these questions the statesmen of the belligerent powers assembled at Vienna in 1814-15. Jealousy and ambition ran rife among them and the negotiations became so bitter that the chances of success seemed remote indeed. No formula for healing the ills of Europe could be decided upon until Talleyrand, the French delegate, appeared with his magic wand of legitimacy—of *status quo ante revolutionem*. This doctrine was applied to some of the problems, but not to all; and among others not to the Belgian Netherlands. England, who had occupied during the course of the wars the Dutch colonies of Ceylon, South Africa, and others of less importance, was not disposed to surrender her conquests. In order to compensate the Dutch she planned to secure for them the Belgian Netherlands. Thus it was that Talleyrand's theory of legitimacy, which would seemingly involve

the return of Belgium from France to Austria, was not applied in this case. Austria, for her part, was willing to give up her claims to the territory in exchange for advantages in Italy and Bavaria [1] and she recognized that a united Netherlands would serve as an admirable shock absorber against the unsteady France. Anything that would protect Europe from more jolts from that direction was looked upon with the greatest favor. On account of these considerations the powers assembled at Vienna decided to combine the Belgian and Dutch Netherlands, thus forming one state, the kingdom of the United Netherlands.

Was the creation of this new state a wise move? History had yet to furnish the final answer, but contemporary historians might have discovered shaky nationalist foundations. For two centuries the Northern and Southern Provinces had existed separately and during that time had passed through divergent historical evolutions. After the revolt in the sixteenth century they had been divided religiously. The Northern Netherlands were largely Protestant; the Southern Netherlands were almost wholly Catholic. At the time of division large numbers of Protestants had left their homes in the South to seek safety in the North and to serve with fidelity and honor the Northern state.[2] This religious difference proved to be a sore, increas-

[1] Pirenne, *op. cit.*, v. VI, pp. 231, 234.

[2] J. L. M. Eggen, *De Invloed door Zuid Nederland uitgeoefend op Noord Nederland op het einde der 16de en bij het begin der 17de eeuw.* Ghent: Koninklijke Vlaamsche Akademie. 1908.

A. A. Van Schelven, *Omvang en invloed der Zuid-Nederlandsche immigratie van het laatste kwart der 16de eeuw.* The Hague, 1918.

ing in acuteness as relations between the two peoples became more intimate.

After the political separation of the Low Countries the Southern Netherlands had accompanied Spain in her decay. The foreign commerce of the Southern Provinces had been practically wiped out when the Republic of the United Provinces closed the Scheldt, thus prohibiting ships from passing between Antwerp and the open sea. This policy sent trade to Amsterdam to the benefit of the Dutch, but to the detriment of the Flemings. The hostility thus aroused between the two sections had been increased by the Treaty of the Barrier (1715). This Treaty, which helped to settle the problems raised by the War of the Spanish Succession, not only confirmed the closure of the Scheldt but provided that the North might occupy the forts of the Southern Netherlands, then under the suzerainty of Austria. In 1722 an attempt was made in the Austrian Netherlands to reap a part of the wealth that was to be gained from trade with the East by creating a trading company which would develop the port of Ostend, and hence overcome the hardship caused by the closure of the Scheldt. But no sooner had the company of Ostend come into existence than the Northern Netherlands, joined by her sister maritime state, England, and by France, was ready with her policy of suffocation. Charles VI of Austria, less concerned with the welfare of his newly acquired territory than with securing the good will of Europe so that his daughter, Maria Theresa, might succeed him on the Hapsburg throne, acceded to the demands of the Dutch, English, and French; he consented to limit the activities of the Company of Ostend and it worried out an uncertain exist-

ence until 1785, being of no commercial importance, but serving as a continuous reminder of the policy of the Dutch.

Such historical traditions were not breeders of good will among the people who were united in 1815. No sentiment of unity prevailed among them. There had been no movement on the part of the Belgians to join the Dutch in casting out the French taskmaster. There was nothing comparable throughout the Netherlands to the national awakening which took place in the Germanies and which was characterized by Fichte's *Addresses to the German Nation* and by the rise of the Burschenschaften. The Dutch alone rose against the French and they were not joined by the Southerners. And after the union the Dutch were all too prone to regard the Southern Provinces as conquered territory and the Southerners to regard the Dutch as foreigners.

The Language Problem

Despite the ill feeling and the difference that historical tradition had created between the two peoples, there was a close similarity of language between the Netherlandish of the North and the Flemish of a part of the South. The union created an interest in Netherlandish literature, philology, and culture among the Flemings. A few leaders became ardent admirers of the Netherlandish tongue, delivering ornate discourses in its favor. This growth of admiration for the Dutch language and for Dutch culture was one of the first steps in the modern Flemish movement, a movement which was to become of prime importance in Flanders after the creation of the state of Belgium in 1830.

The language spoken by the Flemings differed only in dialectical variations from that spoken by the Dutch. Netherlandish was the real base, although differences in expression and pronunciation were to be found from one small village to the next. A distinction also existed in the written language, for the Flemings generally followed an orthography proposed by a local grammarian, Desroches, in 1761, while the Dutch followed that of Siegenbeek, which had been adopted by their government in 1804. During the life of the Kingdom of the United Netherlands (1815-1830) these differences were accentuated because the Siegenbeek orthography and the Dutch pronunciation were considered official. The difference in accent and the apparent difference in the written language led many of the anti-Dutch of the Southern Netherlands to maintain that Flemish and Dutch were two separate languages, a thesis that would have been considered absurd before the time of the French domination, but one which has persisted down to the present time among those opponents of the Flemish movement whose knowledge of the facts is considerably limited. Yet the belief that there were two separate Netherlandish languages found enough adherents to hinder the rapid growth of a feeling of linguistic unity among the two peoples.

The early days of the new kingdom witnessed a certain revival of interest in things Netherlandish among the Flemings. Pamphlets were published lauding the richness, the picturesqueness, and the harmony of this Germanic tongue. As evidence of this revival one might mention the Flemish review, *Le Spectateur Belge,* founded by a Catholic priest, L. De Foere, for the purpose of spreading the Dutch language and creat-

ing a feeling of unity among the Flemings.[3] Of course, those who admired French were ready for the challenge. They answered with the well worn argument that French was the language of real culture, a world language, and that Netherlandish was only fit for the vulgar.[4]

The new government, dominated by the stubborn King William I, was ready to further the use of Netherlandish in the South and very early issued a decree to this end (1814). He consented to the issuance of public documents in Netherlandish without accompanying French translations.[5] In 1819 the King issued detailed orders concerning the use of Netherlandish in official affairs. Measures were taken to increase the use of the "national language" in the official business of the Flemish-speaking provinces of Limburg, East Flanders, West Flanders, and Antwerp. After 1823 Dutch was to be the sole official language in these provinces and provision was made for transferring the unilingual Walloon employees of Flanders to other positions where French alone would be sufficient.[6] A

[3] Curiously enough this review soon adopted the use of French. As examples of articles published in favor of the Netherlandish tongue the following may be cited:

Lettre adressée à "L'Observateur de Bruxelles" par un Néerlandais. The Hague, 1815.

P. A. Vandenbroeck, *Nadeelige gevolgen van de onverschilligheid der Vlamingen en Brabanders omtrent hunne moedertaal.* Alost, 1817.

[4] Barafin, *Sur la langue nationale.* Brussels, 1815.

[5] For the linguistic laws of this period see Floris Blauwkuip, *De taal besluiten van Koning Willem I.* Amsterdam: De Bussy. 1920. See also A. Prayon van Zuylen, *De belgische taalwetten.* Ghent, 1912.

[6] Decree of September 15, 1819. *Journal officiel du Royaume des Pays-Bas.* No. 48. September, 1819.

few years later the Flemish-speaking arrondissements, Louvain and Brussels, of the province of South Brabant were placed under the same linguistic régime.[7]

There was apparent justice in these decrees. The majority of the people in the designated territory spoke only Flemish, and was it not right that they should be served in the language that they knew? The number of those who spoke French exclusively was small and, although they thought that their "rights" were being abused, no great injustice was done them. This linguistic régime was assuredly much more equitable than that which the French had imposed on the Southern Provinces. King William's main purpose was to make French supreme in the Walloon provinces and Dutch in the Flemish. Nevertheless, a great hue and cry was raised against the new law. Officials of the Flemish sections were inclined to accept the law and use Dutch, but lawyers would not. The generation then practicing at the bar had been trained during the French period and for the most part knew only French. A few could speak Netherlandish, but their vocabularies were limited and their pronunciations smacked of some Flemish dialect that they had acquired during their youth. Not a single lawyer used Dutch in the Court of Appeals at Brussels before the date when it was made obligatory.[8] In 1822 a petition was presented against the law by the bar of Ghent. Immediately a

[7] Decree of October 26, 1822. *Journal officiel du Royaume des Pays-Bas.* No. 46. October, 1822. It should be noted that the Walloon arrondissement of Nivelles of South Brabant remained free from the above regulation.

[8] Hamelius, *Histoire politique et littéraire du mouvement flamand.* Brussels: L'Eglantine. Second Edition. 1925. p. 77.

petition was drawn up in favor of it, a document which did not receive a single signature from the legal profession.[9] The Governor of Limburg wrote to the Minister of Justice that in his province most of the members of the Provincial Estates were incapable of using Dutch.[10] Other people, who were not directly affected by the law but who were dissatisfied with the union because of religious differences, found here a reason for condemning the King and his régime.

Momentarily disregarding all opposition William persevered in his plans. He thought that the use of Dutch in official affairs would never be successful unless the large number of public servants received a training in that tongue. Therefore he turned his attention toward organizing and improving the educational system of the Belgian provinces. The Dutch had reformed their schools in 1806 with such success that after the North had been annexed to France no alterations were made in the school system, and William hoped to bring the schools of the South to the same high level as that to which the schools of the North had attained.

The first care of the King was to provide higher education in order to fill the need that had existed in the South since the French had closed the Catholic University of Louvain in 1797. A commission appointed to investigate this matter proposed that the University of Louvain be reopened under Catholic professors, but that instruction in theology be left to Catholic semi-

[9] H. T. Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken der algemeene geschiedenis van Nederland van 1795 tot 1840.* Section 1815-1825. v. II, p. 593-595.

[10] *Gedenkstukken,* pp. 518, 519.

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naries.[11] King William, always independent and self-sufficient, dreamed of a more grandiose scheme. Arguing that the Northern Provinces were served by three universities—Leyden, Utrecht, and Groningen—he decided that the South should have an equal number. The University of Louvain was to be opened as an institution of the state and new universities were to be created at Liége and Ghent. It is not without a certain amount of historical irony that the coat of arms of Holland can still be seen in the buildings of the Universities of the two latter cities.

The opening of the universities occurred in October, 1817. They were state universities in every sense of the word, as were those of the North. The state dictated policies, named professors, and controlled the purse strings.[12] But despite this control the universities were not such active agents of national propaganda as institutions of higher learning were wont to become during the course of the nineteenth century. Latin was used almost exclusively in the classroom and for examinations; the national language was employed in only three branches—Netherlandish literature, practical work in law, and the subject of political science, which was just coming into vogue—and of these the only effective agencies of propaganda were the courses in Netherlandish literature. At Ghent Professor J. M. Schrant, a Catholic priest and professor of Netherlandish literature, attracted a number of young men who learned to admire what came from the North. At

[11] *Gedenkstukken.* 1815-1825. v. III, p. 195.

[12] The university buildings were, however, maintained at the expense of the municipalities in which they were located.

Louvain the same was true of Professor Visscher and at Liége of Professor Kinker. The latter encountered hostility on the part of his Walloon students. He overcame it so successfully, however, that he was able to organize a student club for the further study of Netherlandish literature.[13] From among students thus imbued with a taste for things Netherlandish came the men who were to be leaders in the attempt to continue the revival of Netherlandish literature and language in the Southern Provinces after their separation from the North in 1830.

Secondary education received as complete an overhauling as did higher education. This branch of instruction in the Belgian Netherlands was almost entirely in private hands and for the most part in those of the Catholic Church. Prior to 1817 there were only two state secondary schools, one at Liége and the other at Brussels, but in that year the government undertook to establish one in every large city. They were organized according to the dictates of the King and were aided financially by him. Private schools were allowed to remain open, but were subjected to state inspection much to the discuss of Catholics, who resented interference from the Calvinists of the North.

The newly created state secondary schools played an important rôle in awakening an interest in things Netherlandish. The Dutch language was used in those located in the Flemish-speaking provinces even to the point of employing it for teaching Latin. The influ-

[13] J. F. J. Heremans, "Over den invloed van Noord Nederland op de letterkunde in de zuidelijke provinciën gedurende het tydperk 1815-1830," *Handelingen van het XIII Nederlandsch Congres te Antwerpen.* 1873.

ence of this reform was felt in Wallonia (the Walloon provinces) as well as in Flanders, for Netherlandish courses were provided for the French-speaking population. Private institutions, however, did not take kindly to Dutch and for the most part continued their practice of using French exclusively.[14]

Primary education, the foundation for the higher branches, also attracted the attention of the King and his minister Falck.[15] The schools of the North were excellent for the period and it was hoped that much improvement would be realized in the South. Circulars were sent to the provincial governors urging them to have each city establish at least one private school in imitation of the Dutch law of 1806. Thus stimulated, some of the provinces took action. East Flanders, for instance, reformed its school system by a law of July 23, 1817. In this same year the government created model schools in several cities of the South in the hope of setting an example for the rural districts.[16]

In order to train the teachers necessary under the new order of things a normal school was created at Lier in 1817. All of the instruction was given in Dutch in this new institution and from the time of its foundation it became a center of Netherlandish sentiment. After the separation of the North and South in 1830 the normal school at Lier remained a stronghold of Netherlandish culture and thus an important factor in the Flemish movement.

[14] Hamelius, *op. cit.*, pp. 62, 63.

[15] *Gedenkstukken.* 1815-1825. pp. 35, 224, 226.

[16] *Journal officiel du Royaume des Pays-Bas.* June 3, 1817.

Netherlandish Propaganda in the Belgian Netherlands

Not satisfied with these agencies of Dutch culture, William I reëstablished the *Académie des Sciences et des Belles Lettres de Bruxelles,* November 18, 1816. This "Academy" had been founded in 1772 as a rallying point for the intellectual leaders of the Austrian Netherlands. During the course of the French occupation it had dwindled and disappeared. William now thought that its restoration under Dutch patronage would be an excellent means of winning the favor of intellectuals and of injecting Netherlandish culture into the South. So it was restored and its members chosen. Among those honored were several Dutchmen who were appointed partly in order to realize William's hopes—hopes which were doomed to disappointment. The North already possessed an academy[17] and its prestige overshadowed that of the new Academy of Brussels in the minds of the Dutch. So the Dutch members gradually neglected to attend the meetings and the academy became, in fact, a "Belgian" organization. As during its earlier existence in the eighteenth century, French was generally employed and its members displayed a greater interest in the intellectual life of Paris than they did in that of Leyden, The Hague, or Amsterdam. The Academy was a complete failure as far as being a connecting link between the intellectual life of the North and that of the South was concerned. It was just another of William's attempts at conciliation which proved to be of no avail.

The Netherlandish cause was served by literary and patriotic societies and by a certain number of writers

[17] It had been created by Louis Bonaparte during his reign.

as well as by the schools. At Brussels a society, *Concordia,* had as its mission the propagation of the Netherlandish language and literature, and placed an emphasis on things Flemish. In the same city a literary society was founded by the government in order to interest public officials in Netherlandish culture (1819).[18] Despite the fact that officials should have been interested in an organization formed by the government they served, the society never attained great importance. The powerful Dutch organization, "For the Benefit of the Public,"[19] endeavored to establish branches in the South, but had scant success except in the Flemish provinces where it opened a few small libraries. But even here its influence was not great, its members numbering only 641 in 1829.[20]

More important than the societies were the publicists who became "prophets" of the Netherlandish cause. These men, littérateurs, pamphleteers, scholars, and journalists, wrote profusely in glorification of the House of Orange and of Flanders' language, art, and former glory. Moved by thoughts of reward, or by sincere admiration, or by liberal tendencies, they succeeded in winning numerous converts, although the methods of publication were by no means as well developed then as they are today. Newspapers were scarce; the supply of books was limited; and illiteracy was prevalent. The situation was such that their

[18] *Maatschappij voor Vaderlandsche Letterkunde voor Ambtenaren en 's Lands Bedienden Ingericht.*

[19] *Tot Nut van 't Algemeen.*

[20] Paul Fredericq, "De Maatschappij Tot Nut van 't Algemeen in Zuid-Nederland tot aan de Belgische omwenteling van 1830," *Bulletin de l'Academie Royale de Belgique.* 1913. pp. 269, *et seq.*

propaganda failed to reach the Flemish masses and only found fertile ground among intellectuals and those merchants who were growing rich by trade with the Dutch colonies.

The most famous of these "Orangist" writers was Jan Frans Willems to whom is usually attributed the distinction of having been the father of the modern Flemish movement. Willems was born in 1793 at a little town located between Antwerp and Lier—the very heart of Flemish-speaking territory. His family belonged to that class who eke out a living from provincial governmental positions; his father was a tax collector. From his childhood Willems was taught to read Dutch literature. As a boy he acted on the stage in the dramatic productions of a literary society of Lier.[21] He owed his early instruction to a retired German officer who had settled at Lier and who instilled into the youngster an admiration for Germanic culture. At sixteen years of age Willems left his little village for Antwerp where he immediately allied himself with a group of teachers who had banded together for the purpose of publishing books and presenting dramas. In 1811 he made his début as a poet with a hymn composed in honor of the birth of Napoleon's son, the King of Rome, a poem that might have come from the heart of France judging from its French patriotism. The year following Willems continued in this vein of exuberant praise of the French régime by writing an ode on the battle of Friedland and the peace of Tilsit, a work which was crowned at Ghent.

[21] Such societies were very common in Flanders; nearly every town could boast of at least one. They were known as Chambers of Rhetoric *(Rederijkerskamers)*.

When the Southern Netherlands were detached from France and joined to Holland, Willems' patriotic ardor for France ceased; his love and devotion turned to shower their blessings on the House of Orange and Netherlandish culture. As early as 1814 he sang of the Low Countries freed from the "yoke of French liberty," of the glory of the Netherlandish tongue, and of the wise policies of the good King William, who in reality was stubborn, self-sufficient, and undiplomatic. This prompt about-face was characteristic of the time. Few people had yet learned the religious devotion to a nationality, based on cultural factors, that is a mark of contemporary history. There was on the contrary a tendency to be on the winning side just as there is today among unscrupulous politicians, especially if there is an opportunity for financial remuneration by the change. Remuneration was not lacking in Willems' case either. In 1815 he suddenly jumped from the position of notary public's clerk to that of assistant archivist of the city of Antwerp.

Willems was now free to devote most of his time to study and writing. He contributed regularly to a patriotic Flemish almanac, wrote a collection of proverbs, and composed two comedies. In 1818 he wrote an essay dedicated to the mayor of Antwerp which lauded the Dutch language. He advanced arguments on the subject of language which have been stressed by pro-Flemings from his time down to the present. He deplored the sorry results caused by the use of a foreign language by the upper classes, pointing out that the literary decay in Flanders and the separation of the social classes were to be attributed to this fact. He resented the continual attacks directed against the Flem-

ish language and proposed as a defense the stimulation of an interest in Flemish literature and the composition of polemics on the excellence of the Dutch tongue. His own writings traced the history of intellectual triumphs achieved by persons who used Dutch from the Middle Ages to his own time. His position as archivist at Antwerp and governmental financial aid enabled him to devote much of his time to this work. He produced innumerable articles before 1830 seeking in the history of the Flemish those qualities which he thought would establish their future grandeur, writing of the literary and artistic glory of Flanders, and lauding the greatness of the Netherlandish nationality. From a literary point of view his work was of a mediocre sort, but it found a warm reception among Orangists.[22]

Not the least important of Willems' studies before the revolution in 1830 was an essay on Netherlandish orthography. Inspired by his studies of sixteenth-century Flemish literature he proposed a new orthography based on that formerly used in the South instead of on that employed in his own time in Holland. A certain feeling of regionalism was disclosed in this study and the government spurned his plans, which nevertheless formed the basis for a system officially adopted in Belgium in 1841.[23]

Willems was the chief Flemish agitator during the union with the Dutch. His writings and his studies carried much more weight than those of any other Fleming. He won a reputation for a sort of Dutch

[22] Max Rooses, *Levensschets van Jan Frans Willems.* 1874. Reprinted Ghent: Willems Fonds. 1893.

[23] The system referred to remained in vigor until 1867. See Rooses, *op. cit.*

chauvinism. When the revolution broke out in the South in 1830, he was one of the staunchest Orangists. Although he had been ready to change his allegiance from France to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, he found himself unable to cast aside his admiration for Netherlandish culture and to throw his influence in favor of the newly created Belgium. He remained for the rest of his life pro-Flemish and pro-Dutch. His polemics against Belgium were bitter, their bitterness being increased by the fact that he lost his position as archivist at Antwerp and was given a place in the little town of Eekloo near Ghent.[24]

The Economic Situation in the Southern Provinces

Besides the propaganda which aimed at winning the Southern Netherlands to the Dutch régime, the economic growth and development of these provinces were so favorable that it is strange the union was not more popular. King William did much for the economic welfare of the South. Although this territory was called upon to bear half of the heavy Dutch debt and although its trade with France was impaired, it was amply repaid by all that was done for its development. For instance, the tariff of April 3, 1816, took cognizance of the trade of the South.[25] The same was true of the tariff of 1821-1822 despite the active opposition of the politi-

[24] T. Coopman and L. Scharpé, *Geschiedenis der Vlaamsche letterkunde.* Antwerp: De Nederlandsche Boekhandel. 1899. p. 30.

[25] W. L. Groeneveld-Meijer, *De Tariefwetgeving van het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden 1816-1819.* Rotterdam, 1924.
Gedenkstukken 1815-1825. v. I, p. 41.

cians in the South.[26] The King was ready to give financial aid to inventors and entrepreneurs. He helped John Cockerill in his attempts to work the machines which the latter had brought to the Continent from Manchester by selling him a chateau at Seraing near Liége, which was turned into a factory. Industrial fairs were held; canals were built; and the port of Antwerp, opened to commerce with the outside world, made such rapid progress that the merchants of Amsterdam and Rotterdam feared for their trade. It was through the initiative of the King that a strong industrial bank was created in Brussels (1822) in order to furnish the capital which the new industries and the revived commerce required. This bank, *La Société Générale des Pays-Bas pour Favoriser l'Industrie Nationale,* had a capital of 30,000,000 florins, a large share of the bonds having been bought by the King himself.[27] The growth of the textile industry in the Flemish city of Ghent was remarkable; Liége began to develop into a metallurgical center; Antwerp flourished by trade with the outside world. Nor did the King in his interest for commerce and industry forget agriculture. In every province there existed after 1818 a commission to deal with farmers' problems. When the South revolted in 1830, all classes, save industrial workers who suffered in all countries

[26] Pirenne, *op. cit.*, v. VI, pp. 342, 343.

[27] J. Malou, *Notice historique sur la Société Générale 1822-1862.* Brussels, 1863.

J. H. Clapham, *The Economic Development of France and Germany 1815-1914.* Cambridge, 1921.

B. S. Chlepner, *La banque en Belgique.* Brussels, 1926. v. I, pp. 33 *et seq.*

at the beginning of the industrial revolution, were on the road to economic prosperity.

Towards Revolution

The friction which warmed the two sections to a white heat of enmity was caused for the most part by the different historical evolutions through which the districts had gone since the sixteenth century. There was, in the first place, the difference in religion. The Protestant North could not seem to mesh its gears with those of the Catholic South. Calvinists of Holland feared that the combined forces of Catholics in both North and South might place Protestantism in a position of political inferiority. Catholics of the South, on the other hand, resented the attempt to break their monopoly of education. They opposed the Union from the start and were finally joined by the Liberals as a party in 1828.

Then there was the linguistic problem. Despite efforts to shake them loose, the bourgeoisie of Flanders clung to French, for the use of that language continued to be a mark of distinction. They opposed the law of 1819 which had made the use of Dutch obligatory for public affairs in the Flemish provinces. Lawyers especially chafed under this statute and it is quite comprehensible that several of them—Gendebien, Rogier, Ducpétiaux, and Van de Weyer—should have become leaders of the revolution. The petitions sent to the Estates-General from the Flemish provinces reflect the discontent of the bourgeoisie on this score. It should be remarked, however, that the Walloons did not share this linguistic grievance, for in the French-speaking

provinces no serious attempt had been made to force the Dutch language on the people.

As time went on the criticisms of William I's linguistic policy became so sharp that he decided it was necessary to change his stand. Two decrees were issued in August, 1829 for the purpose of satisfying the demands of the South.[28] These decrees, re-issued June 4, 1830, made the use of French optional in Flanders.[29] All official documents might be drawn up in French, provided the public official concerned could use it; public announcements might be made in French as well as in Netherlandish; and the use of French was allowed before the courts if the defendant chose to use it and if the judge could understand it.[30] Netherlandish remained as before the language of the Kingdom's public administration except in the French-speaking districts and in the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg where German was used along with French.[31] In addition it should be remarked that official publications were always thickened by French translations and that French was widely used in public affairs, being spoken at times in the Estates-General by Dutch as well as by Belgian members.[32] To one acquainted with twentieth century methods of treating national minorities these linguistic laws seem extremely lenient.

Notwithstanding the linguistic concessions, the eco-

[28] *Journal officiel du Royaume des Pays-Bas.* August 8, 1829.

[29] That is in the provinces of East Flanders, West Flanders, Antwerp, Limburg, and the arrondissements of Louvain and Brussels in the province of South Brabant.

[30] Articles 1, 2, and 3.

[31] *Journal Officiel.* Decree of June 4, 1830. Articles 6 and 7.

[32] P. Bergmans, *Etude sur l'éloquence parlementaire belge sous le régime hollandais.* Brussels, 1892.

nomic success of the union, the school system, and Orangist propaganda, the South was headed toward revolution. William's attempts at conciliation proved futile before the attacks of clericals and those who found cultural relations with the North distasteful. Stormy speech led to action and in September, 1830, the Belgian Revolution was in full swing. The attempt at the fusion of the Low Countries into one centralized state had failed. The South had not been made to feel at home in the Union and time had not allowed the Orangist forces to win the support of the Flemish-speaking masses. It had, however, been sufficient to irritate the French-speaking bourgeoisie. Here and there were signs of admiration for things Dutch (as in the case of Willems), signs which were to point to the Flemish movement in the new state of Belgium.

CHAPTER III

The Flemish Movement Takes Form, 1830-1870

The Belgian Revolution and the Use of Flemish in Public Life

It hardly comes within the scope of this study to discuss in detail the events of the Belgian Revolution of 1830. It is well known how the discontented of Brussels, spurred on by the success of the July Revolution at Paris and excited to acts of violence by Auber's opera *La Muette de Portici,* rose in revolt; how the revolutionists organized a provisional government; and, when the Revolution had taken on a serious aspect, how the European powers which had created the Kingdom of the United Netherlands met in conference at London. Under normal circumstances these powers would have supported King William in putting down the uprising, and such a policy was actually favored by Russia, Austria, Prussia, and England. But Russia was occupied with a Polish national uprising; Austria had her troubles in Italy; Prussia had hers in the Rhenish provinces; and England was not disposed to wage war alone. France, for her part, was overjoyed at the prospect of the destruction of a kingdom which had been erected more or less against her. Under the circumstances the powers decided to abide by the *fait accompli;* on December 20, 1830, they recognized the independence of Belgium.

It is likewise hardly within the scope of this present study to linger over the election of Leopold I of the House of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha as King of the Belgians, the wrath of William I and his military campaign, or the successful intervention of the French in protecting the Belgian revolutionists, despite France's avowed policy of non-intervention. It is much more important for our purposes to consider the rôle that the Flemish language and the men imbued with an admiration for Netherlandish culture played in the new order of things. It is to this subject that we shall now turn our attention.

From the very first, it was apparent that the Belgian revolution sought not only to dissolve the political union with the Dutch but also to lessen the cultural and linguistic affinity with Holland. The leaders of the movement were members of the upper bourgeoisie and, as was the custom of this class, were admirers of the French language and French culture and despisers of things Netherlandish. Practically all the members of the provisional government, which was formed in September to direct the destinies of the revolution, held this view. Among them were, for example, the lawyer Alexandre Gendebien (1789-1869), chief of the so-called French party, who desired the annexation of Belgium by France; his colleague, Charles Rogier (1800-1885), who had been born in France at Saint Quentin and who had always remained under the direct cultural influence of his mother country; Baron Emmanuel van der Linden d'Hoogvorst (1781-1866) who, despite his Netherlandish name, was of French culture; the lawyer Sylvain Van de Weyer (1802-1874); Count Félix de Mérode (1791-1857); and finally Louis de Potter (1786-1859), who, proscribed by the Government of

William I, had taken up his residence in Paris. That the political destinies of the new state should have been in the hands of such men did not presage the continuation of policies favorable to the Flemish language or to Netherlandish culture.

The same French-speaking elements maintained their predominant position during the period of revolution and reconstruction. They were particularly in evidence in the constitutional convention, because the right to vote for members to that body was limited to the bourgeoisie; the franchise was given only to persons who belonged to a profession or who paid an annual tax ranging from the equivalent of 13 to 150 florins, depending upon the wealth of the locality in which one resided. In all there were only 46,099 electors and of these only 30,000 exercised their privilege,[1] ample evidence that the election was a class affair. The constitutional convention, which met to construct the political framework of the Belgian state, was indeed an *assemblée bourgeoise* and one might add *française*.[2] Nearly all the leaders of the revolution were there; the little party of Orangists, which might have championed the use of Flemish, played an unimportant rôle.

Under such circumstances it is not surprising that Flemish, which had enjoyed the support of William I, was pushed into the background. The provisional government employed French for its deliberations, made French the official language of the new state, and ordered that the *Bulletin Officiel des Lois et Actes du Gouvernement* should be published exclusively in

[1] Pirenne, *op. cit.*, v. VI, p. 439.
[2] Pirenne, *op. cit.*, v. VI, p. 440.

French.[3] Provisions were made, however, for the use of Flemish and German in law courts in districts where these languages predominated, if the judges could understand them, for correspondence between the government and private citizens, and for public notices.[4]

The constitutional convention followed in general the linguistic policy begun by the provisional government. French was used in its debates and discussions and for the publication of its reports; the Flemish language seems to have enjoyed little favor. The linguistic problem, however, had been of such importance during the union with Holland that it was debated at length by the convention.[5] The solution which was finally decided upon was incorporated in the constitution as article 23. It read, "The use of the languages in Belgium is optional. This matter may be regulated only by law and only for acts of public authority and judicial proceedings." [6]

[3] Translation of the *Bulletin* into Flemish and German was provided for in those provinces where these languages were in common parlance.

[4] All public notices in French were to be accompanied by Flemish or German translations if published where these languages were spoken.

For the legislation see *Bulletin des arrêtés et actes du gouvernement provisoire et des décrets du congrès national.* November 20, 1830.

[5] Huyttens, *Discussions du congrès national de Belgique.* Brussels, 1844. 5 vols.

[6] This translation is from H. L. McBain and Lindsay Rodgers, *The New Constitutions of Europe.* New York: Doubleday, Page, and Co. 1923.

Concerning the constitution see E. Descamps, *La constitution belge comparée aux sources modernes et aux anciennes constitutions nationales.* Brussels, 1877. By the same author, *La mosaïque constitutionelle. Essai sur les sources du texte de la constitution belge.* Louvain, 1892. See also T. H. Reed, *Government and Politics of Belgium.* Yonkers: World Book Co. 1924.

A superficial consideration of article 23 might lead one to believe that it aimed at effecting linguistic equality in Belgium. A more thorough study of the same article, however, reveals its true import. The article made it possible in the absence of detailed legislation for governmental officials and employees to use whatever language pleased their fancy. This being the case, and persons who spoke French being in control of the new state, it was only natural that the French language should have become firmly established for governmental use. One only has to make a casual inspection of the official publications for 1831, the *Bulletin Officiel des Lois et Arrêtés Royaux de la Belgique* and the *Annales Parlementaires,* to see that French predominated.[7] The original reports of the ministers in these publications are in French. Governmental departments and almost all higher officials made use of it for their work; it alone was employed in the public administration; its preponderance in legal matters is proved by documents in the archives of the higher courts *(Cours d'assises, d'appel,* and *de cassation);* and from the very first it was used for drilling and commanding the army.[8] In

[7] The *Bulletin Officiel* was published in French, but with Flemish and German translations accompanying the official text as provided for by the decrees of November 16, 1830, and November 27, 1830. The German translation was stopped in 1839. In 1845 another law created a new publication, the *Moniteur,* to take the place of the *Bulletin.* It was published exclusively in French. An abbreviated collection of laws and decrees, the so-called *Recueil des Lois,* was established at this time. It made use of both French and Flemish. See the provisions of the law of February 28, 1845.

[8] For the use of French in the army see the *Bulletin des arrêtés et actes du gouvernement provisoire et des décrets du congrès national de la Belgique.* Decree of October 27, 1830. Article 4.

fact the new order of things raised French alone to the position of official language, to the exclusion of Flemish and German. This was done by the French-speaking bourgeoisie, and that this class would continue to dictate the linguistic policies of Belgium was assured by the constitution which limited the suffrage for national elections to those who paid a minimum of twenty florins in direct taxes.[9]

The favored position which was given French in official affairs was also given to it in educational matters. In the realm of higher education there were the Universities of Ghent, Liége, and Louvain and to them was added in 1834 the Liberal University of Brussels. In all of these institutions French was adopted for use in the classroom, for administrative purposes, and for doctoral dissertations; Flemish was entirely excluded.

In secondary schools Flemish was relegated to a minor position. Most secondary education was in the hands of the clergy and they continued the policy, which they had been following for some time, of using French. There were, however, state secondary schools, for the system which had developed during the union with the Dutch remained, at least nominally, in force. In 1850 the first organic law concerning public secondary education was passed. It created ten superior *(Athenées Royaux)* and fifty inferior secondary schools and placed the direction, the appointment of the personnel, and the inspection of the schools in the hands of the state. The law provided that Flemish should henceforth be taught thoroughly in regions

[9] See articles 47 and 53 of the Constitution in the *Bulletin officiel des décrets du congrès national de la Belgique*. Decree of February 7, 1831.

where that language was in common use. Although cognizance was thus taken of Flemish, its use as a medium of instruction was not insisted upon. French continued to predominate in state schools as well as in Catholic institutions; it was used for the teaching of most subjects, in many instances even of Flemish. Competitive examinations, which were held among state aided schools, showed for many years an inferiority on the part of Flemish students, and Flamingants maintained that this condition was the result of the use of a language which the students could not understand.[10] Flamingants were anxious to remedy these conditions, arguing that inasmuch as they paid taxes for the support of schools they had a right to expect that their children should be instructed in a language which they could understand. The Walloons and the Gallicized Flemings replied that it was more profitable for a child to be taught in French because of its universality, because it was the key to one of the richest cultures of the whole world, because good positions were open only to those who had a complete mastery of French, and because satisfactory Flemish teachers could not be found.

Regarding elementary education it is much more difficult to arrive at correct generalizations; the decentralized system of primary education precluded the possibility of uniformity in the first years after the

[10] Courses were given in Flemish by Heremans in the *Athenée* at Ghent, Jan van Beers in the *Athenée* at Antwerp, and Julius Sabbe in the *Athenée* at Bruges. See Paul Fredericq, *Schets eener geschiedenis der Vlaamsche beweging*. Ghent: Vuylsteke. 1906. v. I, p. 146 and note p. 147.

The above mentioned school law provided for triennial reports which are important source material for the student of Belgian education.

Revolution. Both the clergy and the communes conducted their schools as they wished. In 1842 state inspection and control were begun and those schools which were supported by public funds generally taught Flemish in the Flemish-speaking districts. Nevertheless, great emphasis was placed upon the instruction of French and much time was devoted to it in both public and private institutions. This was partly owing to the fact that the children of the bourgeois classes made up the greater part of the elementary school population and partly to the fact that their parents desired that they be educated in French. Thus French, even in the lowest grade of learning, held a relatively important position in the first half century after 1830.[11]

In business life, too, Flemish was relegated to an inferior position in Flanders. Three factors contributed to this end. In the first place the Flemish bourgeoisie preferred to use French (to speak it was to put oneself on a level above that occupied by those who spoke Flemish) and they adopted it in their businesses whenever practicable. In the second place the influence of Walloon and French industry in Flanders was very great. It the early years of the Belgian state Flanders went through an economic crisis. The introduction of textile machinery from England killed its important linen industry. The center of manufacturing shifted from Flanders to the coal and iron mines of Wallonia, notably to Liége and Charleroi, although Ghent de-

[11] Concerning the use of French in instruction, see the official *Bulletin*, decree of December 16, 1830; Hamelius, *op. cit.*, p. 93; and Paul Fredericq, *Geschiedenis der Vlaamsche beweging*. Ghent: J. Vuylsteke. 1906. v. I, p. 146, v. III, p. 147. For the use of French in the universities, see also the decree of December 16, 1830.

veloped into Belgium's most important textile city. The result was that big business in Belgium grew up in the hands of French speaking persons. The salesmen they sent about Flanders used French for their dealings; the branches which they founded in Flemish cities were usually directed by Walloons; the technical language of the machine age spread from Wallonia to Flanders and was French. In the third place, the capital amassed during the early phase of the industrial revolution in Belgium was held largely by French speaking persons. When these capitalists invested their money in holdings in Flanders, French was usually used in their new undertakings. This development is well exemplified in the field of banking. The largest bank in Belgium, *La Société Générale,* used French almost exclusively in its affairs.[12] This bank became so strong and its ramifications so widespread that there was considerable opposition to it. One attack against it stated that "From all sides a cry of repugnance arises against the Bank because it is apparent that it tends to create by monopoly a big financial and commercial aristocracy and to ruin small industries."[13] Although this statement undoubtedly was an exaggeration, it is true that the bank used French because its backers pre-

[12] Two other strong banks worthy of mention are *La Banque de Flandre,* which was founded at Ghent by English bankers in 1841, but which has become entirely Gallicized, and *La Banque de Bruxelles,* which has always been in the hands of French speaking persons. See B. S. Chlepner, *La Banque en Belgique.* Brussels: Lamertin. 1926. v. I, p. 230.

[13] *Le Belge.* November 20, 1836. See also a letter in *Le Journal des Flandres.* November 27, 1836. See the defence presented by *La Société Générale* to the King, January 1, 1837, in the *Moniteur,* January 5.

ferred that language, that those concerns which did business with the *Société* in Flanders had to use French, and that the very size of the institution meant that French was employed far and wide in the Flemish speaking provinces.

Flemish Romanticism: Revival of an Interest in Flemish Culture

French had the advantage of being used exclusively for governmental affairs, of having a predominant position in education, and of being employed by the larger business concerns. It also enjoyed the prestige of an elegant, cultural, world language. Flemish, on the other hand, was not used by public officials; it was looked down upon as a vulgar dialect, not deserving the distinction of being called a language. For the most part only the lower classes in the Flemish provinces spoke it and their accents varied from village to village. Even the orthography was not standard, some of the Flemings writing according to the Desroches system, others employing the method used by the Dutch. But, despite the signs, Flemish was not to be downed. It was not an easy thing to change the language of a people that comprise a majority of a state's citizenry. Moreover, the union of the Low Countries had lasted just long enough to stir an interest in the Dutch language and an admiration for Netherlandish culture in the minds of at least a few intellectuals.

It was not long before here and there voices were raised in protest against the linguistic régime. One of the attacks against the new order of things was a pamphlet by P. Blommaert, a man who had been won

during the union to the Netherlandish cause by Professor Schrant of the University of Ghent. This leaflet of twenty pages entitled *Remarks about the Neglect of the Netherlandish Language*[14] appeared in 1832 at Ghent and was one of the first criticisms of the linguistic situation in the Belgian state. Nothing, asserted Blommaert, is so implanted in the foundations of a nation as the language of the people. It is language which diffuses the same manner of thinking through all ranks of society, which distinguishes various peoples, and which consequently determines nationality. Therefore it is the duty of the administration of the fatherland to give the language of the people due consideration. The language of the inhabitants of Belgium is partly Flemish and partly Walloon. Nevertheless Flemish has been pushed to the rear and French has been adopted for all governmental affairs.

"The French language harms in sentimental ways general culture and hinders the propagation of enlightenment among the lower classes. . . . The most detrimental result that the use of a foreign language carries in its train is the deadening of the national spirit. This spirit is, like the emotions of a people, so closely linked with language that it is impossible to have a distinctive folk *(volksbestaen)* without a distinctive language. . . .

"Ah Artevelde,[15] how angry and indignant wouldst thou be if thou couldst see the present-day degeneration of our compatriots. Thou wouldst ask, 'Where has

[14] *Aenmerkingen over de verwaerloozing der nederduitsche taal.*

[15] The author calls upon one of the favorite characters of Flemish history. Artevelde became dictator of Ghent in the fourteenth century, allied Flanders with England, and expelled Louis de Nevers, vassal of the King of France.

gone the virtue, the fidelity of the Belgians?' Belgians: will you let yourselves be mastered by foreigners? Your ancestors were not so weak. . . . Prevent your threatened fall. Speak again your language."

Such was the call which Blommaert issued in 1832 to arouse the Flemings to a defense of their language and their culture. In its stressing of language as the vital test of nationality, this appeal resembled the *Addresses to the German Nation* which Fichte had delivered in Berlin during the hectic days of Napoleonic supremacy.

Other pleas of a similar nature appeared in Ghent at about the same time. For example, one of the newspapers of the city, *De Vaderlander,* published an article entitled *To the Flemish youth,* urging its readers to learn their mother tongue in order to be able to spread information among the common people (July 10, 1832). In Ghent, also, was published annually from 1834 to 1875 the *Little Netherlandish Literary Yearbook,*[16] devoted to Flemish literature and the Netherlandish language.

The leading spirit among those active in such propaganda was Jan Frans Willems, whose influence between 1815 and 1830 has already been mentioned.[17] The defeat of the Dutch in 1830 meant the seeming defeat of Willems' cause. He was a staunch Orangist, one of the most enthusiastic supporters of Netherlandish culture in all Belgium. We have related how he sang the birth of the Roi de Rome and a few years later the creation of the Kingdom of the United Netherlands,

[16] *Nederduitsch Letterkundig Jaarboekje.*

[17] See above, pp. 39-42.

and how he made the transition of allegiance without a qualm. In 1830, however, he refused to be converted to the new régime. During the Revolution he wrote to a friend, "Netherlandish Belgium . . . opposes the revolting plunderers. I have always said this—who speaks French is a Frenchman. The Netherlandish nation is a Dutch nation. . . ."[18] As punishment for his attitude he was deprived by the Belgian government of his position as archivist at Antwerp and was given an insignificant job in the little town of Eekloo, near Ghent, at one-fourth his former salary. He laments, "So I was banished to a little village with my wife and seven children. I was so well off here [in Antwerp] with so many positions—adviser to the Academy, member of the commission for the encouragement of the arts, and curator of the city library, I have so many documents concerning Antwerp and the province. . . . All of them must now be lost. . . ." [19]

Settled in the little village of Eekloo Willems soon gave himself up to a study of medieval Flemish literature. He became the pioneer in Flanders of the literary romanticism which was then rife in Europe and which was essentially a reaction against the "enlightened reason" and cosmopolitanism of the eighteenth century. It was he who began the study of old Flemish manuscripts and who awakened in Flemish intellectuals an admiration for Flemish philology and history. In this respect he did for Flanders what the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm and Hoffmann von Fallersleben, the author of *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles, über*

[18] Coopman and Scharpé, *op. cit.*, pp. 29, 30.

[19] *Ibid.*

alles in der Welt, were doing for Germany. And it is interesting to note that these German scholars were interested in Dutch philology and literature. Von Fallersleben spent some time at Leyden copying manuscripts and while professor at Breslau published some Low German poems, songs, and proverbs of the Middle Ages. He even composed in old Flemish and was considered one of the best scholars in this subject. He came in contact with Willems and stimulated him in the study that the latter had already begun.[20]

The influence of Jacob Grimm on Willems was more direct than that of Hoffmann von Fallersleben. Grimm published the text of a Flemish epic, *Reynard the Fox,*[21] in middle Netherlandish and Willems became interested in the work. A correspondence ensued between the two men with the result that Willems prepared a version of the work in modern Netherlandish, which was published at Eekloo in 1834. It is interesting not only as marking the beginning of a study of Flanders' past but also as a Flemish call to arms. Willems took advantage of the occasion to declare in the preface to his work what he thought of the new political régime.

"From my youngest days I have attempted to resuscitate the neglected mother tongue. I have shielded it with the same vigor from the narrowness of the Dutch orthography and from the crudeness of the Flemish dialect. I have demonstrated and proved to the best of my ability its right in the public administration and by historical sources its rationality. On its account I was banished from Antwerp to Eekloo. It must therefore be very dear to me.

[20] Hamelius, *op. cit.*, p. 102.
[21] *Reinaert de Vos.*

"I have learned in Eekloo that the French language, which for more than six centuries has made no headway against Netherlandish, will never become the language of the greater part of Belgium. From among the 8,600 inhabitants of Eekloo only about 300 can understand French and not 100 can speak it fluently. Still Eekloo has for many years had French courts, French sub-prefects, and other French officials. And now for four years its 8,300 other inhabitants have been governed, daily summoned, exploited, and executed in French.

"We possess the freedom of language. In truth. But it seems to me that the freedom of her sister—the freedom of understanding—is kept from us.

"May this my work on the older part of *Reynard the Fox* contribute to the renaissance of such a beloved language in a time when our land is flooded with so many Frenchmen."[22]

Such a clear statement of the author's views hardly calls for additional comment except to point out that part of his bitterness might be attributed to the loss of his position at Antwerp. Despite his attack on the "alien" French character of the Belgian government, Willems' "exile" at Eekloo ended shortly after the publication of *Reinaert de Vos.* In 1836 he moved to Ghent where the Flemish cause was being championed by a vigorous society aptly named "The Language is the Whole Folk" *(De Taal is Gansch het Volk),* a name which expressed so well the importance which Flemings were attaching to language that it is still quoted in discussions concerning language as the basis of nationality.

[22] J. F. Willems, *Reinaert de Vos.* Eekloo: Van Han en Zoon. 1834. See *Voorbericht* (preface).

It was in Ghent, somewhat awakened to the Flemish cause by the propaganda of Blommaert and by the society "The Language is the Whole Folk," that Willems was henceforth to assert his influence. His environment was indeed more agreeable there than in the town of Eekloo.

Willems was not the only Flemish philologist of importance during this early period. His work was ably seconded by a Catholic priest and teacher, Jan David (1801-1865). David was born in the town of Lier, not far from Willems' birthplace. Indeed, the two men met as students at Antwerp and were drawn together by their common interest in Netherlandish culture. In 1820 David decided to enter the priesthood, but instead of becoming a pastor his inclinations led him toward the life of a scholar. He began his career as a teacher in the *Athenée* (royal secondary school) of Antwerp (1823). He was later engaged in the Catholic seminary at Mechlin and in 1834 he was made professor of history and Flemish literature in the Catholic University of Louvain. His chair became the center of Flemish propaganda among the many Flemish students who went there on account of their affiliations with the Catholic Church.

David's first work in Netherlandish philology was a grammar, *Nederduytsche Spraekkunst,* which aimed at establishing among Flemings the rules followed by the Dutch. In 1840 he founded a review, *The Mediator,*[23] for the purpose of encouraging the use of Flemish in Catholic schools. He organized the Flamingant students of Louvain into a society, "With Time and Ap-

[23] *De Middelaer.*

plication,"[24] from whose influence came many of the leading Flemish poets of the succeeding generation. His most imposing work was his *Vaderlandsche Historie* [25] in eleven volumes, a veritable mass of information, though poorly digested and not popular enough in style to encourage any large number of persons to study the history of their little *patrie*. This ponderous work was quite overshadowed by David's editions of former Netherlandish writers—Maerlant and Ruysbroeck and Bilderdijk. These were his most scholarly achievements.

To the task of editing old manuscripts, publishing medieval romances, and writing local history, which had been so energetically undertaken by the two friends, Willems and David, other men lent their aid. C. P. Serrure (1805-1872), a professor at the University of Ghent, was a co-worker with Willems in the Flemish revival at Ghent. Another was F. A. Snellaert (1806-1872) who, having studied medicine at Utrecht and having served in the Dutch army, came to Ghent in 1835 where he practiced medicine and wrote history, all to the glory of the Flemish cause. Blommaert should also be mentioned in this same school as well as Professor J. H. Bormans (1801-1878), who remained at Ghent but a short time before being called to the state University at Liége.

Willems and David were by far the outstanding forces in this array of Flamingants. They were responsible for the creation of an important Flemish society, "Society for the Propagation of the Nether-

[24] *Met Tijd en Vlijt.*

[25] *History of the Fatherland.*

landish Language and Literature" (1836).[26] The purpose of this organization was to unite those Flemish scholars who were interested in medieval literature and history. Branches were established in Ghent, Louvain, Antwerp, and Bruges, and a review, *Belgisch Museum,* was founded. This publication never became popular; it was predominantly scholarly and archaeological. It had a tenuous existence until 1846, but left in its wake eddies of cultural Flemish nationalism. For its part the society served as a *rendezvous* for intellectual Flamingants—men who had become so embued with the greatness of the Flemish tongue that they had made it almost an object of worship.

It was this same group of men who succeeded in establishing a satisfactory orthography and a uniform spelling for Flemish. This task was accomplished by a commission appointed by the government in 1837, which included among its members Willems, David, and Bormans. The report of the commission, drawn up by Bormans, was published in 1841. It attempted to eliminate the eccentricities of the Desroches rules and to follow (although not completely) the system which was employed in Holland. The report was submitted to leading Flemish writers, called together in a Language Congress [27] at Ghent in December, 1841. Under the presidency of the ever fervent David the Congress approved the report and thus established a recognized uniformity for written Flemish, which was henceforth to be very similar to written Dutch.[28] In 1844 a royal

[26] *Maatschappij ter Bevordering der Nederduytsche Taal en Letterkunde.*

[27] *Taelcongres.*

[28] F. A. Snellaert, *Taalcongres en Vlaamsch feest.* Ghent, 1842.

decree ordered the adoption of the new system.[29] Flamingants considered this a great victory and a celebration was held in Brussels under the auspices of another of Willems' creations, the short lived *Vlaamsch Taalverbond* (Flemish Language Association).[30]

Flemish Romanticism: Popular Literature

The Flemish movement can boast not only an array of "neo-philologists" and "neo-scholars" but also a group of ardent popularizers—the literary romanticists. Much of the symbolism of present-day propaganda is attributable to them. The "fiery Flemish lion" with his outstretched claws, his red tongue, and his crouching body, which one may see on flags at any Flemish demonstration of our own post-war period, was resurrected from the coat of arms of the Counts of Flanders by these writers. The Battle of the Golden Spurs, that bloody conflict against the French in 1302 which ended in the Flemings' capture of untold numbers of golden spurs from their gallant adversaries, was made real to every Fleming who bothered to read a few novels. Praises to the heroes of that battle, Breidel and Coninck, artisans of Bruges, were sung again; Artevelde lived once more; the glories of Flemish art were revived; Bruges, now partly "dead," became dearer because of what littérateurs found to say about her. These romanticists preached to the people what scholars had uncovered for them. They were the Flemish equivalents of Scott, Byron, Victor Hugo, Lamartine, Manzoni, Schiller, and Kleist. Although

[29] *Moniteur.* Decree of January 1, 1844.

[30] Paul Fredericq, *Geschiedenis der Vlaamsche beweging.* Ghent: J. Vuylsteke. 1906. v. I, p. 28.

their creations were not in every case works of art, they were a great improvement over the stereotyped productions of the eighteenth century literary societies —the "Chambers of Rhetoric."

One of the first Flemish romanticists was K. L. Ledeganck (1805-1847). This poet was a native of the little town of Eekloo—Willems' place of "exile." Ledeganck was the son of a school teacher, but he owed his interest in Netherlandish literature to the members of local literary societies. As a youth he read profusely and began to write for prizes which were offered by various organizations. His style was mediocre enough at first, but he improved it by reading eighteenth-century Dutch writers. By 1834 he had advanced to the stage where he was able to win a prize which the government had offered on the subject of the "triumph of national independence." Encouraged by this success he began to study ardently. He read Victor Hugo and Lamartine and learned English and German in order to acquaint himself with Byron and Schiller. At the same time he studied law at the University of Ghent, securing his *doctorat en droit* in 1835. In 1840 he was made justice of the peace and in the same year was named a member of the commission which was appointed to establish the Flemish orthography. It was at this time that he came under the influence of Willems and his work henceforth was marked by stirring Flemish patriotism. He devoted much of his time to the cause, not his least important contribution being a translation of the civil code (1841).[31]

[31] J. F. J. Heremans, *Levensschets van K. L. Ledeganck.* Antwerp, 1847.

His views concerning the Dutch language are to be found in the foreword to his *Bloemen mijner lente (Flowers of my Springtime)* (1839). "We live in a time when our nationality is horribly misunderstood, when even our mother tongue is perverted by a great part of our fellow countrymen. It is therefore perhaps not without profit in such a time to do something to combat foreign influence and to work for the greatest mark of a people's independence—its language."

Ledeganck's most famous patriotic work appeared just before his death (1846). It was an eulogy of the three famous cities of Flanders: Bruges, the picturesque; Antwerp, the commercial; and Ghent, the industrial. It was entitled *The Three Sister Cities*:[32] it rehearsed the former glories of each of these centers. Ledeganck attributed the former greatness of the cities to the fact that they had employed the Flemish tongue. "To renounce that for the effeminate South would be the ruin of Flanders." The book was well received; it marks the renaissance of Flemish poetry.

While Ghent was the center of the agitation just outlined, a group of romanticists was beginning to appear at Antwerp. When Willems had been forced to leave this place on account of the loss of his position, he left behind him a group of friends who shared his ideas. They were for the most part painters and poets. In 1836 they formed the inevitable society (a trait for which the Flemings are famous), under the name of the "Olive Branch."[33]

One of the most zealous of the group was Theodore

[32] *De Drie zustersteden.*

[33] *Olijftak.*

Van Rijswijck (1811-1849). Since his childhood he had read the classics of Dutch literature, but had been encouraged to look forward to a career as an artist. His attempts in sculpture and painting, however, were unsuccessful, and for the lack of any other means of support, he taught school. During the Belgian revolution he found an outlet for his exuberance in the army, where he spent more time in writing satirical verses about his superiors than in performing the duties of a private. The war over, he returned to Antwerp where he became identified with the Orangist agitation.

His first work appeared in 1837 while he was still in his twenty-sixth year. This book, *Original Tales,*[34] was not pure propaganda, but he took advantage of its publication to express his ideas in the foreword, just as Willems had done in his *Reynard the Fox.* This was done in jingling rhyme, not with the stout blows delivered by Willems, but by the sharp prick of the lance. He inquired if there was not a heart left in Flanders to defend the language and the race and if free Belgium would remain a free nation.

Van Rijswijck's severest attack on French influence in Flanders was *Antigoon* (1841). He based his story on the recent history of Flanders. Napoleon is represented as the giant Antigoon who wins the good people of Antwerp by his promises of better times. But once in power the giant neglects his pledges, and the people, having cast out their friends and princes, are left in dire condition. But lo, a young hero comes to the rescue. He is none other than Brabo, the hero of Antwerpian legends, who, it is said, did deliver the city

[34] *Eigenaardige verhalen.*

from a tax collecting giant by cutting off his hand and throwing it across the river Scheldt. It was from this event that the city is said to have received its name—"Hand Werpen" (hand throwing) or "Antwerpen." The young hero, who incidentally is William I in greater or less disguise, chases the giant from the city, reëstablishes the use of the mother tongue which the giant had prohibited, and promotes real local prosperity. But again the people become dissatisfied. They rise in revolt (the Belgian revolution) and a foreign prince (Leopold I) is chosen to rule in the place of Brabo. Again the people are in misery; the use of their mother tongue is once more refused them; solace can be found only in the grave.

Such was the attack that this Orangist directed against the new government. It may occasion surprise that Van Rijswijck was not punished for it, but evidently the government preferred to let a few Flamingants cry in the wilderness than to arouse popular indignation by creating a martyr.

Political Refrains [35] was Van Rijswijck's next attack on the new order. He declared himself to be a partisan of a union with the Dutch Netherlands. He resented the use of French in the administration and complained of the rôle which the Flemings were forced to play in the Belgian state. This collection of propagandist poetry included among others a hymn to O'Connell, the Irish leader. The poet prayed that such a man might grasp the helm of the Flemish movement and pilot it to victory.

In addition to his other work, Van Rijswijck wrote

[35] *Politieke Refreinen.* 1842.

popular songs, some of which have remained in vogue up to the present day.[36] They were full of lightheartedness and frivolity, beer and tobacco, song and dance.

Van Rijswijck was one of the most vehement singers of the Flemish cause among romanticists. His work is not great literature. Personally he was a violent, unsteady character, continually leaving one thing in order to attempt another, wrecking health and wealth in a Bohemian life. His forces were spent by 1849 and the Flemish cause lost in that year one of its most devoted poets.

The greatest of Flemish romanticists was Hendrik Conscience (1812-1883), greatest in that he wrote the most and appealed to the largest number. Strangely enough Conscience was the son of a French sailor, a member of the French Imperial Navy, who had been stationed at Antwerp during those days when Napoleon was intent upon creating a great naval base in the port. His mother was a native of Antwerp of a Flemish family. The son of this union was born in 1812. He had a weak body and, instead of passing his childhood in the rugged manner of the usual Antwerp boy, he spent much of his time in seclusion reading Netherlandish books and dreaming over them. For lack of any better calling he became a school teacher, a task that quite heartily disgusted him, but which gave him time to complete a haphazard education. At the outbreak of the Belgian revolution he enlisted in the revolutionary army.

His military career ended, Conscience returned to Antwerp (1836) where he was so fortunate as to secure

[36] *Volksliedjes.* 1846.

an official position that gave him an opportunity to write. He began to publish immediately, but it was not until his *Lion of Flanders* appeared in 1839 that he became popular. Inspired by the style of Sir Walter Scott, Conscience depicted in glowing terms the struggle of the Flemings against the French in the fourteenth century. He employed all the exaggeration that is characteristic of this style of romanticism. With a stroke of the pen the glorious past of Flanders was made available to the simplest mind. The famous Flemish lion made his début as the symbol of the Flemish movement.

Conscience's Flemish patriotism was unquestioned. In the preface to the *Lion of Flanders* he explained the cause to which he was to devote his entire life. "There are twice as many Flemings as there are Walloons. We pay twice as much in taxes as they do. And they want to make Walloons out of us, to sacrifice us, our old race, our language, our splendid history, and all that we have inherited from our forefathers. No, there is too much true Flemish blood in the world to allow that, regardless of the measures which the Walloons take." Conscience took little interest in the differences which separated the two political parties of Belgium—the Catholic and the Liberal. He devoted all his energy to the glorification of Flanders' past, to the endearment of her customs and traditions. He became the outstanding figure of the Flemish movement in the middle of the nineteenth century.

It is impossible to give a detailed account or even an adequate summary of his seventy-one works. He maintained consistently his progagandist writing until the eighteen fifties, producing two notable historical novels,

De Kerels van Vlaanderen[37] and *Jacob van Artevelde,* the latter again presenting the exploits of the great fourteenth century Fleming. In general, Conscience's work portrayed the humble Flemish life with which he was intimately acquainted and in which he found much that was picturesque.

After 1860 his pen became calmer. He was appointed to an official position at Courtrai and later was made administrator of the museums of Brussels. In 1869 he was elected to the Academy, though he was not completely at his ease amongst the illustrious French-speaking Belgians whom he found there. Despite such compromises on his part Conscience remained the ideal of the Flamingants. Before his death he saw his own monument erected in front of the library at Antwerp with the significant inscription, "He taught his people to read." This indeed summarizes his contribution to the Flemish movement. He taught his people to read, to read Flemish, to cherish their past. His influence on intellectuals was also important and when he died he left many disciples and imitators.[38]

Other names might be mentioned among Flemish romanticists, but none as brilliant as those already cited. There was Jan Van Beers (1821-1888) of Antwerp who was first of all poet and then Flamingant, but who nevertheless cherished the same sentiments as did the others of the Antwerp group. He received much of his love for Dutch from the priest and teacher David

[37] *The Strong Men of Flanders.*

[38] E. de Bock, *Hendrik Conscience en de opkomst van de Vlaamsche romantiek.* Antwerp: de Sikkel. 1920.

Pol de Mont, *Hendrik Conscience. Zijn leven en zijne werken.* Ghent, 1883.

at the seminary in Mechlin and his Flamingant ideas from Conscience. Practically his only patriotic work was inspired by the honors done the latter at his death. It was entitled *Antwerp on the Death of Conscience.*[39] His more important contributions to the Flemish movement were made by inculcating in his pupils of the normal school at Lier and of the Athenée at Antwerp respect and admiration for the Flemish tongue and for Flemish literature. He represented the Flemish cause for a time as member of the city council of his native town. Not the least of his achievements was his success in selling his poetry in Holland and thus in awakening among his linguistic brethren a taste for Flemish literature and an interest in the Flemish movement. This helped to dislodge the feeling which had existed in the Dutch Netherlands since 1830 that the best policy was "complete isolation."

Still other writers assisted in the task of reviving the Flemish language and Flemish literature, but their influence was considerably less important. Domien Sleeckx (1818-1901), the son of a workman of Antwerp, portrayed the life of his city's famous harbor in his *In the Sailor's Section* (1861).[40] August Snieders (1825-1904) served the cause not only by his books, *On the Tower*[41] and *Our Peasantry,*[42] but also as editor of one of the best Flemish newspapers, *Het Handelsblad* of Antwerp. And in Ghent Prudence Van Duyse (1804-1859) contributed to the prestige of the Willems group with his poetry. But the theory that the

[39] *Antwerpen bij het vertrek van Conscience.*
[40] *In't Schipperskwartier.*
[41] *Op den toren.*
[42] *Onze boeren.*

Flemish language had been the source of all Flanders' glory and that the influence of French had eaten into her intellectual life had already been made popular by more ardent writers. The followers only added their bits.[43]

Thus the Flemish language, so despised during the eighteenth century and almost completely ignored by the leaders of the Belgian revolution, became an object of admiration. Literary romanticists placed it on a pedestal and they exhorted all true Flemings to fall down in reverence before it.

Flemish Propaganda 1830-1870

The propagandist methods of the Flemings in this early period, although they were on a very small scale, were typical of those used in large nationalist movements. There was the matter of a song—a national anthem. This was provided by *The Flemish Lion,*[44] the work of a dramatist, H. Van Peene (1811-1864), with accompaniment by an obscure composer, Karel Miry. Inspired by Conscience's *Lion of Flanders,* its swinging verses were destined to be for the Flemings what the *Marseillaise* has been for the French, or *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* for the Germans, and worthy of comparison with either.

[43] There are two volumes in English on Flemish literature. Both are fragmentary. J. Persijn, *A Glance at the Soul of the Low Countries.* Leyden: Vlaamsche Boekenhalle. 1916.

J. Bithell, *Contemporary Belgian Literature.* New York: F. A. Stokes Co. 1926.

[44] Fl. Van Duyse, *Nederlandsch Liederboek.* Ghent: Hoste. 1914. pp. 75 *et seq.*

"No, they shall never tame him,
The fiery Flemish Lion,
Although they dare his freedom
With shackles and with shouts.
No, they shall never tame him,
So long a Fleming lives,
So long the Lion grapples,
So long as he has a claw."

Chorus,

"No, they shall never tame him,
So long a Fleming lives,
So long the Lion grapples,
So long as has a claw."[45]

The Flemish spirit that found expression in such a song made its way into the schools of Flanders in the eighteen-forties. At the Lier Normal School the romanticist Jan Van Beers trained a small missionary force of teachers during his professorship from 1846 to 1860, instructors who spread Flamingant ideas all over Flanders during the next generation. At Ghent J. F. J. Heremans of Antwerp was appointed to the Athenée in 1845 to reëstablish the course in Flemish which had been abolished at the time of the Belgian revolution. Heremans performed the very useful task of writing suitable text-books for use in his classes. A grammar,[46] which he published in 1846, was a remarkable success, going through twenty-five editions and possessing some scientific value.

Under Heremans' influence an organization, "It

[45] Composed 1845.

[46] *Beknopte nederduytsche spraakleer.*

Shall Go Well," [47] was founded (1852) by the Flamingant pupils of the Athenée and was opened two years later to students of the University. The members of "It Shall Go Well" were fervent supporters of the use of Flemish and their society became the rallying point of the Flamingant students of Ghent. They were so earnest in their devotion to their language that they petitioned the Chamber to establish a chair of Flemish literature in the University of Ghent.[48] Somewhat to their surprise their demand was granted and in 1855 two professors, C. P. Serrure and J. F. J. Heremans, opened courses in the University. As no credit was given for the study of Flemish literature, they had few students. Nevertheless, the few provided a nucleus from whose ranks many of the Flemish leaders of the next generation were to come.[49] At the Free University of Brussels Flemish feeling did not run so high as at Ghent, but even there Flamingant students organized a society, "Shield and Friend," [50] patterned after "It Shall Go Well," which formed the basis of a student movement in the capital.

Flamingant societies were not limited to student circles. In order to imbue Flemings who had already passed the school age with a pride in their language and culture, a society, the *Willemsfonds,* named after the "Father of the Flemish movement," was founded

[47] *Het Zal Wel Gaan.*

[48] Flemish courses there had been abolished by decree of December 16, 1830, *Bulletin officiel des décrets du congrès national de la Belgique.* Decree of December 16, 1830. Article 12.

[49] These students founded a review, *Noord en zuid (North and South),* which the Church placed on the Index (May 9, 1857) because of its Liberal tendencies.

[50] *Schild en vriend.*

(1851). Its avowed purpose was "to support and encourage the Netherlandish language and Netherlandish culture in order to strengthen the entire spirit of the people *(volksgeest)* in Belgium." The program of the *Willemsfonds* included the popularization of scientific knowledge, the support of writers, and the erection of libraries. Its progress was slow, its membership being only thirty-eight at the time of founding, one hundred and four in 1861, and not reaching an imposing figure until after 1870.[51] The influence of the society paralleled its size. It centered its attention at first on the publication and sale (at a reasonable price) of Flemish books, but in time it began to found free public libraries, its first one being opened at Ghent in 1865. Internal dissension developed between Catholics and Liberals in the society in the eighteen-seventies and threatened it with disruption. Originally the Flemish question had been placed above all other issues by its members, but in the ensuing years the Liberals had obtained control of the organization and Julius Vuylsteke (1803-1903), a remarkable Flemish publicist and Liberal, had become the leading spirit. His anti-clerical views made the coöperation of the Catholics impossible and they founded a similar society, the *Davidsfonds,* named in honor of Jan David. In time this organization outstripped its rival, but we shall reserve our discussion of its development for a later chapter.[52]

Not the least important of the forward steps which the Flemish movement took in the middle of the nine-

[51] See below, p. 119.

[52] J. Vuylsteke, "Aanteekeningen over de vijf en twintig eerste jaren van het Willemsfonds," *Verzamelde prozaschriften.* Ghent, 1887. v. II, pp. 253, *et seq.*

teenth century was that of winning the sympathy and interest of a few Dutch intellectuals. A great gulf had been created between the two countries by the Revolution of 1830. The Hollanders, once defeated, felt that they ought to let the Belgians go their independent way. The Orangists in Belgium, although they remained loyal to the idea of union, devoted their attention to the propagation of Flemish culture. In order to bridge the intellectual gulf which was growing up between the Flemings and the Dutch, certain Netherlandish enthusiasts decided to hold a congress to effect a *rapprochement*. And so in 1849, the same year that the Pan-Slavs held their first congress at Prague, intellectuals from Flanders and Holland met at Ghent, in the first Netherlandish Language and Literary Congress.[53] It was an interesting coincidence and surely an indication of the progress that the idea of linguistic nationality was making in Europe.

The invitations which were sent out expressed a sort of Pan-Netherlandism. The aims of the Congress were to protect the Netherlandish "race" from destruction and to unite the intellectual forces of Holland and Flanders.[54] The questions to be discussed in the hopes of realizing this union were "Netherlandish history, the Netherlandish language, Netherlandish literature, Netherlandish drama, songs, music, and the trade in Netherlandish books." It was expressly provided that

[53] *Nederlandsch Taal- en Letterkundig Congres.*

[54] Paul Fredericq, *op. cit.*, v. I, p. 51. "To preserve the Netherlandish race; to prevent the perishing of parts of the now divided Netherlands; to study the means by which a unity may be wrought in the development of North and South Netherlanders in order to preserve the soul and the language of the people; to strengthen the entire spirit of its people."

religious and political matters should not be discussed. For four days the members from Holland and Flanders dealt with the agenda. The Congress was closed by a stirring address by the President, F. A. Snellaert, who concluded, "There is a unit folk and a unit state; the latter is the work of man, the former is the work of God. . . . The Great Powers have not strength enough to divide asunder peoples who have sprung from the same race and are bound by the same language." [55]

The Netherlandish Language and Literary Congresses proved successful after they had managed to weather some storms of the next few years. They furnished a meeting place for the leaders from the two sections. They did not develop into popular demonstrations, as one might have thought they would judging from the tenor of Snellaert's speech, but rather into scientific conventions for the discussion of technical matters. It was through the initiative of these Congresses that the compilation of a great dictionary was undertaken in order to establish once for all a standard for the Netherlandish language. Similar work had been done for the Germans by Adelung and Jacob Grimm, for the Poles by Linde, and for the Czechs by Jungmann. Each linguistic group seemed to have a passion for the standardization and purification of its language. The compilation of the Netherlandish dictionary was undertaken by Professor M. de Vries of Leyden and Dr. L. A. te Winkel; its publication was begun in 1864. The contents of its ponderous tomes were accepted almost immediately in both the North and

[55] Julius Vuylsteke, "Letterkundige congressen," in his *Verzamelde prozaschriften*. v. II, p. 33.

the South [56] as the last authority; they were respected with all the honor that the French attribute to the dictates of the Academy in matters of language. The de Vries and te Winkel dictionary has remained the standard work for Dutch down to the present time; later philologists have only added to its vocabulary.[57]

The press has been one of the most important agencies in propagating Flamingant doctrines and in filling the ranks of the Flemish movement. In the early years of the nineteenth century newspapers were by no means the power that they are today in forming or in expressing public opinion. Of the twenty-six Flemish journals appearing in 1840 not one was a daily. They appeared once, twice, or three times a week, were expensive, and had small circulations. One of the Flemings of that period wrote, "In my childhood days a newspaper was an article of luxury. . . . The best Flemish papers counted from six to nine hundred subscribers. Not a single journal was sold on the street. . . ." [58] In 1848 a stamp tax, which newspapers had previously been forced to pay, was abolished and journalism was thereby stimulated. But in 1857 there were only fifty-

[56] It was adopted by the Belgian Government for official use by royal decree of November 31, 1864. See the *Moniteur*.

[57] The most up-to-date dictionary at the present is the Van Dale. In the last few years an attempt has been made to introduce a simplified spelling—the so-called Kollewijnsche spelling. It has not yet been adopted universally, although it has made rapid progress. It has found as many supporters in Flanders as it has in Holland and does not raise the problem of creating a difference between the language used in Flanders and that employed in Holland.

[58] Frans De Potter. Born 1834.

five Flemish papers and only six of these were dailies.[59] None of them supported the Flemish cause wholeheartedly. An attempt was made in 1844 to found an avowedly Flamingant daily, *Vlaemsch België,* but it was a financial failure. Most Flemish leaders depended upon the columns of fairly conservative papers for the expression of their views. Some of them, not content with this situation, founded periodicals on their own initiative. Willems, for example, had his *Belgisch Museum* (founded 1836), which at times counted over six hundred subscribers. Upon his death in 1846 the publication of this review was abandoned, but was begun again in 1855 as the *Vaderlandsch Museum* and continued to appear under this title until 1863.

Gradually the Flemish press multiplied; the fifty-five journals of 1857 increased to one hundred and sixteen by 1884, and nine of these were dailies.[60] In 1870 came the first cheap Flemish paper, the *Volksblad* of Ghent. The example set by this journal was followed by a score of others—a change which was to revolutionize the press and bring daily news to the attention

[59] Six appeared three times a week, four of them twice, and the rest once a week. In this early period the *Gazette van Gent* (founded 1867 and still appearing today), *Het Handelsblad* (1845 to today), and *De Eendragt* of Ghent (1846-1874) were the most important.

[60] In 1873 Holland had two hundred and four newspapers.

From a Flamingant point of view the most important of the new organs referred to above were the Liberal *De Zweep* of Brussels (founded in 1869 by Julius Hoste); the Liberal *Het Volksbelang* of Ghent (founded in 1867 by Max Rooses, J. Sabbe, J. De Vigne, Ad. Hoste, J. Vuylsteke, J. F. J. Heremans, and W. Rogghé); and *De Halletoren* (1874-1880) of Bruges, a pro-Flemish monthly directed by Julius Sabbe.

of the lower classes. But this is a story to be told in a later chapter.

In some nationalist movements the theater has played an important rôle in arousing patriotic sentiments. In Flanders, however, from 1830 to 1870 the Flemish theater had slight influence. The Liberal minister Rogier established triennial literary prizes [61] as a gesture of good will during the excitement occasioned by the report of the Grievance Commission.[62] But as no opportunity was provided for the production of these pieces, they were never staged unless by some obscure dramatic society. The result was that Rogier offered (1860) state subsidies to Flemish theaters for the production of Flemish pieces in order to quiet the Flemish demand for political reforms and at the same time to secure Flemish support for the Liberal Party.[63] Rogier's subsidies were increased by his pro-Flemish successor Alphonse Van den Peereboom who became Minister of the Interior in 1861. About a hundred Flemish dramatic societies were founded between 1860 and 1872, and about 1,200 productions annually received state subsidies amounting in all to 150,000 francs.[64]

This state aid, which was gradually abandoned, aroused an interest for the theater among the Flemings although it failed to create great actors or great dramas. The dramatic productions of Flanders were of a very

[61] On the Flemish theater see the work by M. Sabbe, L. Monteyne, and H. Coopman, *Het Vlaamsch tooneel in de XIXde eeuw.* Brussels, 1927.

[62] See below, p. 91.

[63] P. Hamelius, *Histoire politique et littéraire du mouvement flamand au XIX siècle.* Second edition. Brussels: L'Eglantine. 1925. p. 237.

[64] *Ibid.*, p. 238.

inferior type and up to the time of the World War the Flemish drama was far behind other literary work. But an interest in the theater had been aroused and those most concerned had seen the need for professional actors and permanent theater buildings. Some success was attained in Brussels by a company which was made financially possible through the patronage of the journalist Julius Hoste. Nevertheless, it was not until municipal and provincial governments gave their support to the building of theaters for Flemish productions that real progress was made.

The Flemings List Their Grievances

The aims to be attained by the Flemish movement were not definitely stated in the first years after 1830. In a vague manner Flamingants knew that they wanted to have their language used in the affairs of government and to develop Flemish culture. Nevertheless, they had no definite objectives which they hoped to attain at once. In 1840 the first program was formulated. In that year a petition which had been prepared by Willems and which had been signed by 100,000 people (so it was claimed) was sent to the Chamber. This document demanded that all official affairs in the Flemish provinces be conducted in Flemish, that the correspondence between the central government and the Flemish provinces be carried on in Flemish, that a Flemish Academy be erected, and that Netherlandish be put on an equal footing with French at the University of Ghent.[65] The petition aroused some interest

[65] This petition is reproduced in Paul Fredericq, *op. cit.*, v. I, pp. 22, 23.

in the Chamber, but it was sent to the Ministry of the Interior where it found a quiet grave.

A much more detailed and also more famous list of grievances was drawn up in 1856. In that year the twenty-fifth anniversary of the accession of King Leopold I to the throne of Belgium was to be celebrated. The Minister of the Interior, a Flemish sympathizer, P. De Decker, thinking that he would make this a gala occasion, proposed to open a musical competition and offered a prize for the best cantata, which was to be sung at the celebration of the jubilee. The poet Jan Van Rijswijck, brother of the Flamingant Theodoor Van Rijswijck, who had lost an official position a few years previously because of a literary attack on the King, published a scathing letter in place of the cantata which had been demanded.

"We love our institutions, our government, but are we loved in return? For twenty-five years the Walloon has been the spoiled child of the government. The Fleming has been repulsed and despised. The one is able to obtain everything because he knows from his birth a poor sort of French; the other is able to obtain nothing because chance gave him a Flemish mother. 'Become French,' they cry to us, 'and all that will pass.' Ah, Gallicize ourselves, become bastards . . . , lose all that which characterizes a Netherlander, sell the nation of one's soul. Forget our origin, the glory that has been conquered by Flemings in past centuries and all will be over. And what would we be other than negroes on a plantation, than Indians in an English colony? They also live in the country of their birth. . . . Here is, in place of an ode, what we shall send to the government. And whoever, either for the so-called honor

or for a miserable sum of money, is able to obtain anything else from his pen is no true poet, no Fleming, and no Netherlander." [66]

The fiery article created considerable excitement. For the first time the masses displayed an interest in the Flemish movement. There were symptoms of unrest. The Minister of the Interior feared that the twenty-fifth anniversary of the coronation of King Leopold would be the scene of disorders and not the time for singing the praises of the King. In order to still the waters of popular indignation the Government proposed to create a commission to investigate the Flemish question, to study the demands of the Flamingants, and to suggest reforms. This proposal was realized by royal decree, June 27, 1856.[67]

The members of the commission, appointed by the Government, numbered nine and included such famous Flamingants as Conscience and David as well as other writers and publicists with similar Flamingant sympathies—men who were hardly qualified to conduct an impartial and scientific study of the Flemish movement or to suggest reforms other than those contained in the Flamingant platform.

The Commission began its work with a will. It studied the linguistic situation in the Southern Low Countries during the Middle Ages; it investigated the use of Flemish during the Spanish and Austrian periods; it examined the official repression of Flemish under the French, its renaissance under William I, and

[66] J. Van Rijswijck, *Werken.* v. III, p. 23.

[67] See *Moniteur,* decree of June 27, 1856.

its place in the new Belgian state.[68] In order that the members might better cope with the linguistic question in contemporary Belgium they asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs to have the Belgian diplomatists in those countries where similar difficulty had arisen make reports on the solutions attempted. The Commission in this way received some enlightening material on the problems of Switzerland, Sardinia, Denmark and Austria-Hungary.[69] Besides these sources the members of the Commission drew heavily from their own personal experiences and their prejudices. Especially was this true of Conscience who depicted in the saddest terms the life of a Fleming in the army in which he himself had served as a private.

After a year of investigation the report was ready. It was approved by all the members of the Commission except by the priest David who thought that it was too radical. In spite of his dissent the report was handed to Minister De Decker. The Flamingants, realizing that they had an excellent opportunity for some further publicity, asked De Decker to publish the report. Although he favored the Flemish cause, he did not like the bitter language or the radical views of the Commission and therefore delayed action. In a few months De Decker fell from office and was followed by the anti-Flamingant minister, Charles Rogier, who had made his name famous as the leader of the Belgian

[68] *Commission flamande rapport.* Brussels, 1859. pp. 88-101.

[69] *Commission flamande rapport.* Brussels, 1859. p. 130. These reports are not very profound, but are very interesting as contemporary material.

revolution. He too refused to publish the report until at last forced to do so by the Chamber.[70]

The report of the Commission of 1856 (the Flemings call it the "Grievance Commission") was the great manifesto of the Flemish movement. It was at once an indictment, a defense, and a platform. No other document in the entire history of the Flemish movement is as important as this. The report charged the Belgian state with *lèse-langue,* a crime as terrible in the eyes of modern peoples as was that of *lèse-majesté* in medieval eyes. It recalled how French had been adopted for use in the army, in the constitutional congress, in general and local administrations, in the communal councils, in the courts, by the police, and in the universities.[71] In addition the Commission endeavored to answer the arguments, which were current at that time, for the use of French rather than of Flemish in public affairs. In answer to the statement that the unity of Belgium depended upon unity of language and that therefore everyone should be able to speak French, the Grievance Commission replied that the universal use of French would nullify the constitution, which declared the equality of French and Flemish before the law, and insinuated that respect for the constitution did not depend upon the use of French but upon the strict application of the freedom of language.[72] To the argument that Flemish is not a language but only a dialect the Commission replied that "What one wants to reduce to the status of a dialect is the language of 7,000,-

[70] *Annales parlementaires,* 1858-1859. p. 197. The report was printed in Flemish and then translated into French.

[71] *Commission flamande rapport.* p. 100.

[72] *Ibid.,* p. 101.

000 Netherlanders of the North and the South who possess a common literature, whose origin loses itself in the dusk of centuries." [73] The proposition that French was not the language of the Walloons any more than it was the language of the Flemings, but that it should be used because it was a common and convenient tongue, the Commission condemned as sophistry.[74] To those partisans of French who maintained that the use of Flemish was an obstacle to civilization, the Commission retorted that the most glorious days of Flanders had been those when the Flemish language had been most used.[75]

One of the most important questions which the Flemish Commission attempted to solve was that of the language to be used for public education. Ever since the birth of state-controlled education during the French Revolution there has been trouble in the multilingual states of Europe as to what language should be the medium of instruction. Every nationality has expressed the desire to educate its youth by means of its own language; and the Flemings have not been an exception to the general run. The members of the Commission complained against the almost universal use of French in secondary schools and the fact that so much time was given to the instruction of French in the primary schools of Flanders. They argued as did other linguistic minorities that a child should not begin the study of a foreign language too early in life, candidly adding that the "instruction in the mother tongue

[73] *Ibid.*, p. 102.
[74] *Ibid.*, pp. 102, 103.
[75] *Ibid.*, pp. 103, 104.

has the great advantage of inculcating more profoundly in the heart of the youth love of country, while experience has too often taught the result of the other system." [76] The Commission proposed that Flemish be used in the primary schools of Flanders and in the second-class secondary institutions, that it be taught as a foreign language in the Athenées (first-class secondary schools),[77] and that it be employed exclusively at the Lier Normal School.[78] Moreover, the Commission demanded that instruction in the many state trade schools be in Flemish as well as in French.[79] As regards higher education the Commission proposed that at least some of the courses at the University of Ghent be given in Flemish in order that physicians, lawyers, and teachers might serve the people of Flanders in a language that they understood. Finally it was suggested that a Flemish Academy be established to unite and honor Flemish intellectuals and to lend prestige to Flemish culture.[80]

As regards the use of Flemish in official affairs, the Commission demanded first and foremost the translation of official publications into Flemish, especially *Les Annales Parlementaires* and the *Moniteur*.[81] Moreover, it proposed that all relations between the central government and the Flemish speaking provinces,

[76] *Ibid.*, p. 105.

[77] *Ibid.*, pp. 108-110.

[78] *Ibid.*, p. 108. Special provisions were made for Brussels where there were so many bi-linguals. A sort of mixed system was proposed. The Commission also suggested that all Germanic languages should be taught through the medium of Flemish.

[79] *Ibid.*, pp. 112-115.

[80] *Ibid.*, p. 118.

[81] *Ibid.*, pp. 119, 120.

whether written or verbal, should be in Flemish or in Flemish and French;[82] that all codes should be translated into Flemish; that judges and lawyers should be able to use Flemish and French and that the defendant in a case should be allowed to choose the language of his preference, even before the highest courts; that the army be divided into Walloon and Flemish regiments, each being commanded in its mother tongue; and last of all that officials of the diplomatic corps be required to know Flemish in order to be able to serve Flemings as well as Walloons in foreign countries.[83]

The report made by the Commission terminated with a statement of faith.

"The Flemish movement is not an isolated and narrow effort without roots in the past, without fruition in the future. It is the continuation of all that which is noble and great in our annals. Its mission is holy and it is its duty to realize it without fear for or discouragement by the obstacles to be overcome. The Flemish movement is the expression of the general need for independence whose spirit is manifested every day by new events.

"In Belgium partisan spirit and personal interest are more or less completely separated from the linguistic question. They work outside the national principle and the national principle outside of them. Which will be the victor? Language is more than personal interest. It is identified with that which the people hold most dear. It is more than political consciousness, which is subject to many modifications due to exterior circumstances. It is dearer to a people than religion, because it is older and more individual. What intelligent gov-

[82] *Ibid.*, p. 123.
[83] *Ibid.*, pp. 123-129.

ernment would violate the individual, political, and religious conscience of a people in order to impose its own opinion? The question of language is a question of conscience in which nobody other than the possessor of the language has the right to interfere. It is therefore a question which will not suffer discussion."

In 1856 the Flemish Grievance Commission proposed a program so far in advance of the thought of the masses of Flemings at the time that it served as the expression of Flamingant demands until the World War and has continued to serve in some respects until the present. And what is more, the program concluded with an outburst of sentiment that would have been worthy of a Mazzini, a Louis Kossuth, or a Maurice Barrès.

In the field of economics the Commission listed no grievance. This was perhaps owing to the fact that the Commission was appointed primarily to consider the language question and secondly because it thought that the economic conditions in Flanders at the time were not particularly bad.[84] In the first years after 1830 Flanders had gone through a period of economic depression. The industrial revolution in Wallonia had caused havoc to Flemish industrial establishments; the Dutch policy of preventing the free passage of ships between Antwerp and the open sea, which lasted until 1839, impeded the development of Flemish commerce; and a potato famine in 1846 brought with it conditions which are comparable with those in Ireland during the same period. In 1869 a Flemish deputy, Baron de Maere of Ghent, spoke in the Chamber concerning

[84] *Rapport.* p. 104.

Flanders' economic situation. He maintained that the population of the Walloon provinces had increased much more rapidly between 1830 and 1864 than had that of the Flemish provinces. He demonstrated that the number of voters in the Walloon provinces had greatly increased and, as suffrage was based on the amount of direct tax paid, he inferred that the wealth of Wallonia had increased faster than that of Flanders. He quoted statistics to show that in 1864 only forty-three per cent of the Flemings who entered the army could sign a statement declaring that they had read the military laws, while seventy per cent of the Walloons could do this, a proof that illiteracy was greater in the Flemish provinces.[85] As he came to the conclusion of his argument, he declared the reason for the "deplorable state of affairs" to be that the common people in Flanders did not keep pace with economic progress, with the latest methods of doing things, because the intellectual class held itself aloof from the people, which militated against a popularization of knowledge.

Baron de Maere's contentions concerning Flanders' economic situation were refuted by another Fleming, Kervijn de Lettenhove.[86] He endeavored to show that although Flanders had fallen from the relatively dominating economic position that she had held in early times, she was just as wealthy as Wallonia. There seems to have been much truth in his contention. In the following table it will be seen that the average number of voters per 1,000 inhabitants was as great in

[85] *Annales parlementaires.* 1868-1869. January 14, 1869. pp. 243-246.

[86] *Annales parlementaires.* 1868-69. January 16, 1869.

Flanders as in Wallonia under a suffrage system based on direct taxes.

	Number of Voters per 1,000 Inhabitants in 1850	*Number of Voters per 1,000 Inhabitants in 1877*
Flemish Provinces		
Antwerp	20.3	28.3
West Flanders	16.1	19.7
East Flanders	18.6	20.8
Limburg	15.2	17.2
Average for Flemish Provinces	17.5	21.5
Walloon Provinces		
Hainault	17.	20.7
Liége	17.	20.8
Luxemburg	14.1	14.9
Namur	14.6	19.3
Average for Walloon Provinces	15.67	18.9
Bi-lingual Province of Brabant	20.4	27.4

These figures were taken from the *Annuaire statistique 1879.* Brussels: Callewaert. 1880. p. 91.

The significant part of de Maere's statement was not his declaration that Flanders was in a period of economic depression or his allegation that the Flemish provinces suffered at the expense of Wallonia, but rather his charge that the lower classes of Flemings were not able to better their lot because the upper classes were separated from them by language. He was the first to advocate the theory that the Flemish movement is a social movement, that it is carried on by the Flemish

speaking lower classes against the French speaking bourgeoisie of Flanders, an idea which was to find brilliant expression toward the close of the nineteenth century by a prominent Flemish economist, Lodewijk De Raet.[87] That there is much in this theory is evidenced on every hand. Practically all of the leaders of the Flemish movement have risen from the lower classes; we have already noticed this fact in the case of Conscience, Willems, David, and Van Rijswijck. Flemish writers have ridiculed on many occasions wealthy French speaking Flemings and their clumsy imitations of French manners; they have treated as traitors those Flemings who have adopted French; and they have complained that knowledge, especially scientific knowledge, has been kept from the masses because bourgeois intellectuals could express themselves only in French.[88] It is indeed quite clear that, if the Flemings of 1856 had an economic grievance, it was not that they suffered at the hands of the Walloons, but rather that they were "oppressed" by the French speaking bourgeoisie of Flanders.

Politics and the Flemish Movement, 1830-1870

From 1830 to 1870 very little was done to correct the conditions against which the Flamingants complained. Neither the Liberal nor the Catholic Party

[87] See below, pp. 164 *et seq.*

[88] Emile de Laveleye, a Belgian historian of the nineteenth century, explained the situation in this way: "Since the Dukes of Burgundy and especially since our annexation to France the upper class, which is the seat and the instrument of intellectual culture, speaks French. The Flemish people—the farmers, workers, and *petits bourgeois*—are thus separated from the ray of civilization." *La Gazette*. 1889.

made an issue of Flemish grievances. The Liberal Party received most of its support from French speaking persons—the upper bourgeoisie of the cities and the middle classes of the industrial districts of Wallonia. It stood for lay government, state education, and a slight extension of the suffrage. The Catholic Party drew most of its strength from the agricultural classes and the bourgeoisie of the smaller towns. It practically controlled the politics of the provinces of East Flanders, West Flanders, Antwerp, Limburg, and Luxemburg. Despite the fact that its power lay in Flemish speaking territory, it did not champion the Flamingant cause. The distinguishing feature of its program was its insistence upon making the influence of Catholicism felt in government and education.

Liberals and Catholics maintained a political truce from 1830 to 1847; members of both parties joined in coalition governments. In the first years after 1830 this was done in order to present a united front against William I, who delayed signing a definitive treaty of peace with Belgium until 1839, and was continued from 1839 to 1847 by force of habit. Gradually the parties adopted intransigeant positions and the decisive victory of the Liberals in 1847 put an end to coalition cabinets. In that year Charles Rogier became premier and held that post until 1852 when he was succeeded by another Liberal, De Brouckère, who held office until 1855. The Catholic Party managed to secure control of the government in 1855 and under the leadership of De Decker remained in power until 1857. In that year the Liberals were again victorious. Charles Rogier returned to the premiership which he held until 1867 when he resigned, having served twenty-two years as a minister of state.

He was followed by the Liberal Frère-Orban who governed until the victory of the Catholics in 1870.

The fact that Liberals and Catholics united in securing a settlement with Holland of the differences arising out of the Revolution of 1830 and in establishing the new state of Belgium, indicates what slight chance such a minor issue as the Flemish movement had of obtaining the support of either party. When the attainment of the ends for which the parties united was fairly well assured and the political situation might have allowed some consideration of Flemish demands, the Liberal Party, the party of the French speaking bourgeoisie, came to power and manifested but slight interest in the Flemish cause, and the Catholic Party was loath to champion a movement whose popularity was uncertain. For these reasons, as well as for the fact that the Flemish movement was, after all, of secondary importance during the period 1830-1870, almost nothing was done to liquidate Flemish grievances.

In the face of such circumstances Flamingants attempted to form political organizations of their own. In 1846 certain Flemings of Antwerp, including Conscience and Van Rijswijck, organized The Holy Union.[89] They adopted an elaborate ritual which smacks of the ceremonies of the Masons or of the more picturesque rites of the Ku Klux Klan. The various branches of the organization were the Rubens Camp (Antwerp), the Artevelde Camp (Ghent), the Breidel Camp (Bruges), and the Agneessens Camp (Brussels). At the opening of each meeting the president said in solemn tones, "With God's presence let us

[89] *Het Heilig Verbond.*

begin. Flanders the Lion." Whereupon the brothers responded, "Flanders the Lion." The organization even employed a new calendar, dating its years from the Battle of the Golden Spurs, July 11, 1302, a change which appears to have been in imitation of the alteration of the Christian calendar by the French revolutionists. The program of the Holy Union was published in a leaflet—*Declaration of Principles* (1847).[90] It demanded that in Flanders the two national languages —French and Flemish—be placed on an equal footing in the educational system, that Flemish be used in the courts, that laws and decrees be published in both languages, and that public officials be required to know Flemish. But that the Liberal and Catholic members of the Holy Union were not one in their views and that they had little hope of their organization's becoming a strong Flemish party was revealed in the following declaration: "The leaders of the Flemish movement belong as such to one or the other of the two national parties. They consider the mission of their fatherland [Belgium] great enough, their contemplated work important enough, their part comprehensive enough, to devote their energies to the service of that land." They determined to remain faithful to the old political parties and to attempt to win those parties to the support of the Flamingant cause. This proved futile and after a short time the *Heilig Verbond* was heard of no more.

The next attempt at political organization was the Flemish Union[91] of Ghent, which was founded in 1861, for the purpose of demanding of all candidates for

[90] *Verklaring van grondbeginselen.* Ghent: Vuylsteke. 1847.
[91] *Vlaemsch Verbond.*

public office in Flanders whether or not they approved of the Flamingant program. The Union endeavored to secure candidates who would approve the exclusive use of Flemish in primary education in Flanders, the equality of French and Flemish in secondary schools, the right for university students to choose between French or Flemish literature for their degrees, an official Flemish translation of Belgium's law codes, the establishment of industrial, commercial, and agricultural instruction in Flemish, equal division of governmental contracts between the Walloon and the Flemish provinces, and knowledge of Flemish by all officials in Flanders. It was not long, however, before this society was dashed to pieces on the Scylla and Charybdis of Liberalism and Clericalism.

In Antwerp the Netherlandish Union[92] was more successful in its attempts to aid the Flemish movement, before it became divided by dissension between its Catholic and Liberal members. This organization was founded in 1861 by a group of Flamingant Liberals who had bolted their party because no attention was given their demands. The leaders of the society carried the issues of the Flemish cause to the people by a campaign of large public meetings, thus winning for their organization the name "Meetingist Party." Their appeals proved popular and they won several seats in the city and provincial councils. Taking advantage of their initial victory they managed to pass local ordinances requiring the officials of Antwerp to know Flemish (May 2, 1864), making Flemish the official language of the city (August 27, 1866), erecting a

[92] *Nederduitsche Bond.*

Flemish theater, and demanding that provincial officials be able to speak Flemish. Nor was the influence of the Meetingists merely local; they sent three deputies to the Chamber at Brussels, Jan De Laet, Gerrits, and Edward Coremans, who opened a campaign for Flemish laws in the national assembly. In still another respect the victory of the Meetingists proved to be of importance, for, as they were men from the lower classes, they broke the political power of the French speaking bourgeoisie of Antwerp. In due course of time the Meetingists went aground on the shoals of rivalry between Liberals and Catholics. In 1865 the Liberal members seceded and founded the Liberal Flemish Union,[93] deciding that it was better to try to force a Flemish program on the Liberal Party than it was to coöperate with the Catholics.[94] The latter, for their part, adopted much the same attitude toward the Liberals and from this time until after the World War almost all Flamingants remained in the old parties rather than attempting independent organizations of their own. The Meetingists, however, had performed a useful function—they had paved the way for the realization of Flemish reforms by political methods.

Arousing the Chamber to the need of passing laws to extend the use of Flemish was a slow process. In 1863 one of the Meetingists, De Laet, upbraided the Francophiles for having abolished the signs which bore the Flemish names of the streets in Brussels (1851) as though preparations were being made for the city's be-

[93] *Liberale Vlaamsche Bond.*

[94] In Ghent at this time there was the *Vlaamsche Liberale Vereeniging*—an active group of Flemish Liberals—similar to the group in Antwerp.

coming the departmental seat of a French province.[95] The Chamber's attention was drawn to the Flemish question and it delegated De Laet to study the Flemish petitions which had been pouring into the Chamber and to make a report on Flemish grievances. In the document which he submitted to the legislature in 1866[96] he condemned the policy which had been practiced since 1830 of obliterating Flemish, for, he claimed, it had made the two social classes in Flanders hostile to each other, it had threatened the union of the country, and it had made Belgium the intellectual parasite of France. In his enumeration of grievances he condemned most bitterly the situation which made it impossible for a Fleming to defend himself in the courts in his own language.

It was concerning the last point that Flemings most desired reform and the need for a change was made obvious by a series of unfortunate events. The first of these occurred in 1863. A certain Jacob Karsman was fined five francs for having published a poem without the name of the publisher. He carried his case to the Court of Appeals in Brussels where the pleas of his lawyer to try the case in Netherlandish fell on deaf ears. The earlier sentence was made more severe, Karsman being condemned to three months in prison and a fine of sixteen francs and fifty centimes. The unfairness of the court's ruling was recognized by the leading Belgian legal review, *La Belgique Judiciaire*,[97] but the Chamber took no action. The following year

[95] Reference is made here to a much talked of invasion of Belgium by Napoleon III.

[96] *Annales parlementaires.* May 4-5, 1866.

[97] January 21, 1864.

a tragic aspect of the linguistic situation was brought to light. Two Flemish workingmen, Jan Coucke and Pieter Goethals, were tried in Wallonia for murder. The entire case was conducted in French, a language which neither of the defendants had ever mastered. But their lawyer knew no Flemish. The translator who was employed was from the province of Luxemburg and knew neither French nor Flemish very well. Under such conditions and despite their pleas of innocence the two men were condemned to death and guillotined. A year later the real culprits confessed their guilt before the same court which had pronounced the unfortunate verdict upon Coucke and Goethals. This incident aroused the ire of the Flemings and De Laet, thinking the time ripe for legislative action, presented a bill to the Chamber which provided that no court official should be appointed in Flanders who did not know the Netherlandish tongue.[98] True to its tradition the Chamber, which had been under the control of the Liberals since 1857, defeated this bill, December 13, 1867.[99] All successful attempts to pass laws favoring the Flamingants belong to the period after 1870.

[98] December 5, 1867.

[99] The vote was 54 to 40. Only one Liberal voted for the bill.

CHAPTER IV

Cultural and Propagandist Aspects of the Flemish Movement, 1870-1914

Catholic Writers: Gezelle, Verriest, Rodenbach

The long infancy of the Flemish movement lasted approximately from 1830 until 1870. During this period scholars and littérateurs were awakening among the Flemings an admiration for the Netherlandish tongue, for Flemish literature, and for all Flemish culture. It was also during these years that a clear cut program and a list of grievances were formulated. But, although some popular interest was created in the Flemish movement before 1870, it was largely limited to intellectuals. The movement had, so to speak, a general staff but no privates. In the years which followed 1870 a real army was mobilized; writers and propagandists carried the message of the Flemish movement to the common people.

Among those whose work played an important rôle in bringing Flemings to an appreciation of their language and culture may be mentioned the Catholic West Flemish writers Guido Gezelle, Hugo Verriest, and Albrecht Rodenbach, men who threw off the bonds of romanticism.

From a purely literary point of view the work of Guido Gezelle (1830-1899) is probably the finest that was produced in Flanders during the nineteenth cen-

tury; it is the kind which suggests the hand of a master. Born of humle parents Gezelle studied assiduously as a youth and at the early age of seventeen showed that poetic aptitude which carried him to fame in later life. Having determined upon the priesthood as a career he became a teacher (1854) in a West Flemish Catholic preparatory seminary and there among the people whom he knew the best he began to compose the gems of modern Flemish poetry. His language as well as his style received the most careful attention. Not content with the Netherlandish that the romanticists had used, he spent years in seeking new words and idioms in the dialect of his native province, much as Frédéric Mistral was doing in Provence to enrich Provençal. In fact, around Gezelle grew up a linguistic particularism —a sort of West Flemish regionalism. He looked with disfavor on the work of the Netherlandish Language and Literary Congresses; he preferred to have Flanders develop its dialects rather than obliterate them by establishing Dutch as the standard literary language for all Netherlanders. In later years Gezelle helped to compile a dictionary of the West Flemish dialect so that this provincial idiom might be preserved.[1]

Gezelle's subjects were as commonplace as his language. The death of one of his students was the theme for his *Churchyard Flowers*[2] and a farm for *Pictures of a Farm Yard.*[3] Nature, Christian service, and love for Flanders were his most common subjects. An

[1] This dictionary was that of L. De Bo, *West Vlaamsch idioticon.* 1875.

[2] *Kerkhofblommen.* 1858.

[3] *Pachthofschilderinge.* 1856.

example of the latter may be found in his *Poetic Exercises:*[4]

> "My Flanders speaks a single tongue,
> God gave each land her own.
> Then let it be rich, let it be poor,
> It is Flemish and it is mine!"

Despite his brilliant work things did not go well with Gezelle in his younger life. His critics were very severe and discouraging. He was not popular with the authorities of the school where he taught; he did not follow the program outlined; he ignored his colleagues who did not appeal to him; and he was quite generally misunderstood. Not the least important reason for his unpopularity was the fact that he was "Flemish" and that his students showed signs of becoming Flamingants, a catastrophe for the sons of bourgeois and for the reputation of the school. Under such circumstances Gezelle was asked to resign his post as schoolmaster. In the years which followed he was for a time assistant director of the English Seminary in Bruges and from 1872 to 1899 parish priest at Courtrai.

Gezelle's religious superiors little realized how deeply they had wounded him—that in dismissing him from the school they had broken his spirit. Disappointed and discouraged the poet laid aside his pen for twenty-five years. From time to time he contributed to a West Flemish review, *Loquela,* and in 1865 he founded a magazine of his own, *Rond den Heerd.* He aided De Bo with a West Flemish dictionary and translated some English verse, his best work of this sort being a translation of Longfellow's *Hiawatha.* During this

[4] *Dichtoefeningen.* 1858.

period he displayed such a hostility to the Flemish movement that students of his life have been led to wonder whether or not the Gallicized higher clergy of Flanders brought pressure upon him to forsake his Flamingant sympathies. Whatever the cause may have been, it is true that in a speech delivered on September 30, 1885, he condemned those students who went to Flamingant extremes, ridiculed William I, objected to the introduction of Dutch as the literary language of Flanders, and drank the health of a "Fransquillon" bishop.[5]

The blanket of disappointment and discouragement which smothered the poetic fire of Gezelle for so many years was finally thrown off. In 1893 he published the *Crown of Time*,[6] and in 1897 *Necklace of Rhymes*[7] and *Last Verses*.[8] He now displayed a riper and more spontaneous style than he had shown in his earlier writings. The derogatory views of critics changed to extravagant praise; the Dutch began to read and appreciate his work; and the younger writers of both Holland and Flanders pronounced him to be Flanders' greatest poet. But hardly had Gezelle begun to write again and to receive the unstinted praise of all than death overtook him (1899).[9]

From this meager description of Gezelle's life and

[5] French—*Fransquillon,* Flemish—*Franskiljon,* is a term employed similarly to the English Francophile but refers specifically to a Fleming who has become Gallicized and who opposes the Flemish movement.

[6] *Tijdkrans.*

[7] *Rijmsnoer.*

[8] *Laatste Verzen.*

[9] Concerning Gezelle see A. Walgrave, *Studien op Guido Gezelle.* Hoogstraten: Haseldonckx. 1914.

work, it will be difficult for those unacquainted with the phenomena of national movements to appraise justly his significance to the Flemish movement. It is true that he was not an ardent Flamingant, that at times he opposed many of the planks in the Flemish platform, and that his works betray only a mild Flemish nationalism. Yet Gezelle was of outstanding importance. He admired the Flemish language and Flemish culture and in his rôle of teacher he imparted his admiration to many of his pupils. But he exerted his greatest influence as a writer. The sheer excellence of his works caused them to be read by even those Flemings who were accustomed to read French books and encouraged many young writers, who might otherwise have written in French, to write in Flemish. He became the idol of Flemish littérateurs and to his door can be traced much of the interest in Flemish culture that was displayed in Flanders at the end of the nineteenth century.

The most famous of Gezelle's followers was Hugo Verriest (1840-1923). He too was priest, poet, and professor. From 1867 to 1877 he taught in the Preparatory Seminary at Roeselare, the school from which Gezelle had been dismissed. Here he was able to put the Flemish stamp on many of his pupils. He helped to found the *Flemish Flag,*[10] a student magazine around which rallied those students who decried the use of French in Flemish schools. One sees signs of Verriest's approval of the Flemish movement in his *Lectures;*[11] one finds the charm of Flanders in his descriptions of Flemish rural life, *On Hikes*[12] and

[10] *De Vlaamsche Vlagge.*
[11] *Voordrachten.*
[12] *Op Wandel.*

Rainbow;[13] and one gets an insight into Flemish character in his short sketches of important contemporary Flemings, *Twenty Flemish Faces.*[14]

Verriest had in his turn an illustrious student, Albrecht Rodenbach (1856-1880). As a pupil in the Preparatory Seminary at Roeselare he read Goethe, Dante, Shakespeare, and Wagner. He was greatly inspired by Conscience and probably by Arndt and Körner. At Roeselare Rodenbach caught the vision of Verriest, that a nation must live and grow. Then like the young Schiller in the military academy of Karl Eugen, he found himself in an environment which he did not like, for the object of his greatest concern, the Flemish language, was methodically repressed in the school. If students even dared to speak this tongue during recreation hours, they were severely reprimanded. Rodenbach revolted against such conditions and began a Flemish student movement, the *Blauwvoeterie,* which may be compared with the German *Burschenschaften.* From Conscience he borrowed a cry, "The gull flies, a storm is on the sea" *(Vliegt die blauwvoet, storm op zee),* which, with its implication that trouble was brewing, became the rallying call of Flamingant youths. With his comrades Rodenbach went about Flanders presenting the dramatized works of Conscience and gradually coming to a realization of his own literary powers. His

[13] *Regenboog.*

[14] *Twintig Vlaamsche koppen.*

Concerning Verriest see A. De Ridder, *Pastoor Hugo Verriest. Biographische Studie.* Amsterdam: De Nederlandsche Boekhandel. 1908. Also see Filip De Pillecyn, *Hugo Verriest, zijn leven en zijne werken.* Thielt: Lannoo. 1906.

outstanding work in these early days was the *Song of the Blauwvoeterie:* [15]

"Hear a song from Flemish sons,
Hear a West Flemish song,
The old free Northern tones
From the mouth of Flanders' youth.
Yes we are the Kerels' sons,
Sing it in the olden tones.
Cry to each other: Hurrah
The gull flies. Storm on sea."

In 1876 Rodenbach went to the University of Louvain and carried his Flamingant enthusiasm with him. His influence was great among both students and faculty; he put new life into the literary activities of all. In 1877 he published *Fifty Student Songs* [16] and in 1878 his *First Poems.* In the same year he founded a review, *Het Pennoen,* and shortly thereafter, because of difference with other editors of the *Pennoen* staff, he began *Het Nieuw Pennoen.* It was at Louvain that he wrote his most ambitious work, *Gudrun.* This drama in verse was planned to be the epic of a redeemed Flanders. The young writer depicted the Flemish struggle against Romance culture by portraying the "ancient Belgians" defending themselves against Roman domination. The story was laid in the third century. Gudrun, a beautiful maiden full of character and loving qualities, represented Flanders. At a moment when her protectors were away, she was captured by a Roman warrior. She almost suffered harm, but

[15] *Het Lied der blauwvoeterie.*

[16] *Vijftig studentenliederen.*

was delivered just in time by her native lovers, the leaders of the Flemish movement.

Rodenbach died in his early twenties. He seems to have been a remarkable youth—upright and well bred. His character and personality won for him a large following, and he has remained the hero of the Catholic student movement.[17]

A little aside from the main current of the newer tendency, yet drifting in the same stream, is to be found Pol De Mont, poet, teacher, and art critic. Although his literary influence was less than that of Gezelle, Verriest, or Rodenbach, and despite the fact that he wrote with neither the passion nor the profundity which characterized these three men, he was one of the writers who did much to prepare the ground for another literary movement in Flanders that developed in the last decade of the nineteenth century.

A New Literary School: Van Nu en Straks [18]

In 1893 a review, *Van Nu en Straks,* was founded by men who had been inspired by Guido Gezelle and by a Dutch literary movement, the *Nieuwe Gids.* Among the editors and contributors to the new review were to be found August Vermeylen, Karel Van de Woestijne, the novelist Stijn Streuvels, and a number of others

[17] Leo Van Puyvelde, *Albrecht Rodenbach. Zijn leven en zijn werk.* Amsterdam. 1908. F. Rodenbach, *A. Rodenbach en de blauwvoeterie.* 2 vols. Amsterdam: Van Looy. 1909.

[18] *Van Nu en Straks* is a most difficult term to translate. Literally it means "From Now and the Future." It might be rendered "From Now On." It signifies an awakening and implies realization in the future. Inasmuch as translation of the term is so difficult, it will be kept in Dutch in the text.

who were destined to be the leading literary lights of Flanders during the next three decades.

Vermeylen was the motive force behind the review. "He cried the loudest and beat the drums." [19] Vermeylen had studied at Berlin and there had come in contact with the ideas of Max Stirner, the apostle of philosophic and literary anarchism.[20] Stirner had in his turn gleaned much from the doctrines of Hegel and had preached, "I want to be all that I am able to be and to love as much as I am able to love." [21] Vermeylen applied Stirner's doctrine to the Flemish movement with remarkable effect. In the former's *Kritiek der Vlaamsche beweging* [22] (1895) and *Vlaamsche en Europeesche beweging* (1902) [23] his ideas are succinctly set forth. In the former essay he maintained that the rights of a nation are the rights of individuals and that the Flemish movement is only an attempt on the part of the Flemings to develop fully all their capacities not only as regards language but also as regards their entire cultural and economic life.[24] Inasmuch as Belgium was the alleged hindrance to such a development, it received some severe blows: "All young and fighting forces wring themselves free from oppression, disregard law in so far as it is possible, turn

[19] André De Ridder, *La Littérature flamande contemporaine.* Paris: Champion. 1923. p. 23.

[20] See J. H. Mackay, *Max Stirner, Sein Leben und Sein Werk.* Berlin, 1898.

[21] Max Stirner, *Der Einzige und Sein Eigenthum.* Reklam Edition. p. 164.

[22] *Survey of the Flemish Movement.*

[23] *Flemish and European Movement.*

[24] *Kritiek der Vlaamsche beweging.* Second edition. Bussum: Van Dishoeck. 1905. p. 21.

their backs on parliaments and bureaucracies . . . !" [25] Vermeylen even went so far as to praise the day when Belgium's national anthem, *La Brabançonne*, would be hissed to silence by the Flemings. In his *Flemish and European Movement* he couched the same ideas in more moderate terms, arguing that in order to be a good European one must first be a nationalist and "we wish to be Flemings in order to be good Europeans." [26]

Although Vermeylen disclaimed these doctrines a few years later,[27] he had cast the die. His words were eagerly received by the intellectual youths under his influence who reëchoed them as catch-phrases throughout Flanders. These youths of the 1900's were the very ones who as "Activists" were later to attempt with German aid to destroy the state of Belgium and to create a "free" Flanders.[28]

The review *Van Nu en Straks* lived until 1902 when it was replaced by *Vlaanderen*. The same men continued to support the new review, which, however, never attained the value of the former, being first of all of an anthological nature. In its turn it succumbed in 1907. Mention of the numerous contributions to these reviews hardly comes within the sphere of this study. It suffices to remark that the Flemish people were given a literature worthy of their admiration.[29]

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

[26] *Vlaamsche en Europeesche beweging.* Ghent: Flandria. 1902. pp. 10-16.

[27] See the preface to the second edition of the *Kritiek der Vlaamsche beweging.* Bussum: Dishoeck. 1905.

[28] See below, pp. 187-217.

[29] An excellent history of modern Flemish literature is that by André de Ridder, *La Littérature flamande contemporaine.* Paris: Champion. 1923. See also August Vermeylen, *Van Gezelle tot Timmermans.* Amsterdam: Elsevier. 1923.

In addition to the group of intellectuals who supported *Vlaanderen,* there were those who rallied around other reviews, the *Vlaamsche Arbeid* and the *Boomgaard.* The members of the former group were in a way the popularizers of the *Van Nu en Straks;* they complained that the writings of their predecessors were too stilted for the Flemish people. The *Boomgaard* group on the other hand endeavored to surpass the *Van Nu en Straks* in the search for pure esthetics. The former were Catholics and pro-Flemish, the latter were free lances and abhorred the excesses of the Flemish movement. These dreamed of cosmopolitanism, but they were too far above the masses to offset the forces at work creating Flemish patriotism and never succeeded in stemming the tide.

Flemish Music, Theater, Art: 1870-1914

The cultural phase of nineteenth century nationalist movements was by no means limited to literature and philology. There was a tendency for nationalities to produce works in the fields of music, art, and drama which they claimed were expressive of their "national souls." Thus it was that impressionism came to be looked upon as characteristically French, that the Moscow Art Theater's style of acting was thought to represent the "Russian spirit," that Wagnerian music was considered to be typically German, and that Verdi's compositions were looked upon as "Italian." Practically every nation was accredited in the popular mind with distinctive contributions in every field of cultural interest. Smaller nationalities, and among others the Flemish, aspired to similar reputations in order to give

the impression that they possessed well rounded, many sided national lives.

In the case of Flanders a definite attempt seems to have been made to attain this cultural independence in music. Up to about 1870 it was customary to classify the compositions of Flemings as "Belgian." Only a few works such as *The Flemish Lion,* which had been composed in 1845, and Netherlandish texts for cantatas, which had been admitted to the annual Belgian musical competition, *Le Prix de Rome,* in 1864, had been considered Flemish prior to this time. But with Peter Benoit, Flanders' greatest composer, there developed in the last decades of the nineteenth century what was looked upon as "Flemish music."

Benoit was a prototype of what a Fleming is popularly supposed to be. Liszt characterized him as "the musical Rubens" and there is much that is suggestive in the comparison. Benoit was greatly influenced by Flemish folklore, as Grieg was by Scandinavian, and this gave his work the appearance of being distinctively Flemish. His first important composition was a cantata entitled *Lucifer,* which placed him at the head of Flemish composers. In 1867 he became the director of the musical school in Antwerp which developed into a veritable center of Flemish music and at the same time of Flemish patriotism. The prestige of the school grew rapidly and its Flemish admirers demanded that the state convert it into a Royal Flemish Conservatory similar to what the Walloons possessed at Liége and to the one at Brussels. A long struggle ensued which ended victoriously for the Flemings in 1898.[80] While head

[80] *Moniteur.* June 26, 1898.

of the Antwerp school Benoit played the rôle of patriotic composer and used every branch of musical art in order to express his sentiments. He composed an opera taken from the history of the Flemish Low Countries, *De Pacificatie van Gent*;[31] oratorios and cantatas, *De Schelde* (The Scheldt), *Vlaanderens Kunstroem* (Flanders' Artistic Glory), *Joncfrou Kathalyne* (Maiden Cathaline); and popular Flemish fighting songs, *Lied der Vlamingen* (Song of the Flemings) and *Beiaardlied* (Song of the Carillon).[32] All of these had a Flemish setting, were considered "Flemish," and were set up by Flamingant critics as models for others to follow.

Some of Benoit's contemporaries endeavored to attain the standards set by the master but none of them had as much influence as he in the Flemish movement. Edgar Tinel, Jan Blockx, and Hendrick Waelput all contributed to Flemish culture, but less to Flemish patriotism, although Blockx was the author of a popular song, *Ons Vaderland* (Our Fatherland), which had a considerable vogue. That the songs composed by these men and others might become known to the Flemish masses, they were collected by Ferdinand Van Duyse and published under the auspices of the *Willemsfonds*. Van Duyse's collections made their way into nearly every Flamingant home prior to 1914 and were a real agency in propagating the ideals of the Flemish movement.[33]

[31] *The Pacification of Ghent.*

[32] Julius Sabbe, *In Memoriam. Peter Benoit, zijn leven, zijne werken en zijne betcekenis.* Antwerp, 1902.

[33] M. Sabbe, "De Vlaamsche Muziek." Published in *Vlaamsch België sedert 1830.* Ghent: Ad. Hoste. 1906. pp. 120-132.

In keeping with the avowed policy of developing all phases of culture, the Flemings founded several theaters between 1870 and 1900.[84] Antwerp took the initiative in this matter and in 1874 began a municipal Flemish theater. Brussels followed Antwerp's example and a Flemish theater was inaugurated in the capital in 1887 in the presence of the King and Queen. Some indication as to the national significance of these theaters is given by the fact that at the opening exercises of Brussels' theater, Leopold II, to the surprise of the audience, made a speech in Flemish, the first that Belgian royalty had ever made in public.[85] The Flemish theater in Brussels was followed by the construction of a Flemish municipal theater in Ghent in 1899 and a Flemish opera house in Antwerp in 1893. Thus by 1900 Flamingants had added one more link to the Flemish cultural chain.

It now remains to consider what Flemish artists of the nineteenth century contributed to the Flemish cause. As far as actual patriotic sentiment is concerned, it is safe to say that they contributed very little. None of them tried to portray by painting or by sculpture the "oppression" of Flanders or the "danger" of French cultural domination. Some of the artists went back to the Dutch masters for their inspiration and others to the Flemish schools of Rubens and Breughels. In the works of Hendrik De Braekeleer, for instance, one finds traces of the Pieter de Hoogh tradition. Still other painters came under the influence of the Barbizon

[84] On the Flemish theater see the work by M. Sabbe, L. Monteyne, and H. Coopman, *Het Vlaamsch tooneel in de XIXde eeuw.* Brussels, 1927.

[85] *Volksbelang.* October 15, 1887.

school, as in the case of F. De Lamorinière, F. Claus, and A. Verwee. All, however, were classified as belonging to the modern Flemish school, and by comparison, were thought of as the modern protagonists of the Flemish artistic tradition made famous by such glorious names as Memling, Van Eyck, Breughel, and Rubens.

The case of Flemish sculpture was very similar to that of painting. Belgium's most famous nineteenth century sculptor, Constant Meunier, was Flemish on his mother's side, but devoted his talent to the representation of Belgian workers rather than of Flemish patriotism. Jef Lambeaux, Antwerp's best sculptor, ignored the Flemish movement in his themes. His most famous work, the statue before the Hotel de Ville at Antwerp, merely retells the legendary history of the founding of the city. The farthest that sculptors went in the field of Flemish patriotism was to mould figures from Flemish history for subsequent erection in public places. Of such a sort was Paul de Vigne's *Jacob van Artevelde* at Ghent and his statue of Breidel and De Coninck in the Grande Place at Bruges. Although such works were not decidedly nationalistic, they were "Flemish" and hence had a significant place in the development of the Flemish movement.

Agencies of Flemish Propaganda, 1870-1914

In the national movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries one can distinguish two categories of activity. In the first place there was the formation of national ideals, the work of scholars, writers, and other intellectuals, and in the second place there was the propagation of these ideals, the task of orators,

journalists, and patriotic societies. If one will look back to the foregoing pages, one will see a definite development in Flamingant idealism from Jan Frans Willems to the Grievance Commission and finally to the writers of the *Van Nu en Straks* school. On the other hand, the propagation of Flemish nationalism seems to divide itself into the period before 1870, when greatest emphasis was placed upon winning educated Flemings to the cause, and the period from 1870 to 1914, when definite attempts were made to secure the support of the masses. The first phase is marked by the founding of such exclusive organizations as the Netherlandish Language and Literary Congresses and the *Willemsfonds* and by the establishment of newspapers with limited circulations. The second phase is characterized by the growth of already existing patriotic societies and the appearance of new ones, the establishment of a national holiday when orators might give vent to their feelings, and the creation of very cheap newspapers with large circulations.

The development of the press vastly enhanced its importance as an agent of national propaganda in Flanders;[36] its growth meant that all classes could be reached by the arguments of the Flemish leaders. How fast this development was may be seen from the fact that in 1857 there were only 85 Flemish journals in Belgium, whereas in 1900 there were 39 dailies and 334 weeklies. The first Flemish daily, the nonpartisan *Volksblad,* was founded at Ghent in 1870. It was followed by the Catholic *Gentenaar* (1879) and the Socialist *Vooruit*

[36] Ad. Hoste, "Vlaamsche drukpers en boekhandel" in *Vlaamsch België sedert 1830.*

(1884) in the same city. The Christian Democrats created *Het Land van Aalst* edited by Father Daens and *Het Volk* (1890) of Ghent; the right wing of the Catholic Party, *Het Nieuws van den Dag* (1885) at Brussels and *De Gazet van Antwerpen* (1890); and the Liberals, *Het Laatste Nieuws* (1885) in Brussels. These were on the whole for the common people. Another group of less popular journals was founded for the aristocracy. *Het Handelsblad* (Catholic) of Antwerp, which had been founded in 1844, now became a modern journal, as did the old Liberal *Koophandel* (Antwerp) under the title of *De Nieuwe Gazet* (1897). Julius Hoste, the most prominent journalist of the period, founded the *Vlaamsche Gazet* in Brussels (1900) and engaged a staff of excellent writers in the hope of creating an organ equal to *De Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant,* the outstanding Dutch paper. The circulations of the Flemish journals varied considerably, but they were all much larger at the end of the century than they had been in 1850, when none had been in excess of two thousand. The largest of them, *De Gazet van Antwerpen* (Catholic), issued in 1900 from 80,000 to 100,000 copies a day, a number equal to the largest French paper in Belgium, *Le Soir* of Brussels. The *Nieuws van den Dag* (Catholic) and *Het Laatste Nieuws* (Liberal) had circulations of about 65,000; *Vooruit* (Socialist) of 22,000; and *De Vlaamsche Gazet* of 9,000.[37] These papers spread their influence wherever Flemish was read. The fact that 3,500 copies of *Het Laatste Nieuws* were sold at Liége, 2,800

[37] P. Fredericq, *Geschiedenis der Vlaamsche beweging.* v. II, pp. 292, 293.

at Charleroi, 1,500 at Roubaix, and 2,900 at Lille in France gives an indication of their penetration even into French-speaking territory. With this journalistic force the Flemish language naturally became more deeply ingrained, the desire for reforms inevitably more intense, and the opportunities for propaganda much greater.

Propaganda by means of the press was supplemented by that carried on by patriotic societies. In the first years after 1870 the most important of such organizations was the *Willemsfonds.* Its membership grew steadily from 1,563 in 1874 to 4,544 in 1884 and its budget increased until it amounted to 70,000 francs in 1882.[38] In 1884 the Liberal Party suffered a decisive defeat at the polls and the *Willemsfonds,* being Liberal, suffered with the party. Its membership dropped to about 2,500, a figure which has seldom been exceeded since. The society thus failing to enlist the masses in its ranks turned to the publication of more scholarly works than had been its custom. It issued among others a valuable history of the Flemish movement by Professor Paul Fredericq of the University of Ghent.

The *Davidsfonds,* the Catholic organization which corresponded to the *Willemsfonds,* and which, as we have already remarked, was founded in 1875 by those Catholics who did not approve of the anticlerical tendencies of the *Willemsfonds,*[39] was more successful in securing affiliation of the common people. In 1884 its membership totaled 6,098 and in 1913 12,206. It contributed to the Flemish cause by publishing popular

[38] *L'Indépendance.* October 5, 1882.

[39] See above, pp. 76-77.

books and by actively supporting every attempted reform.

To these societies was added in the period from 1870 to the World War a Flemish Catholic organization, the *Katholieke Vlaamsche Landsbond,* created for the purpose of stimulating the Clerical party to action.[40] Its method was to make contacts with Catholic societies in Flanders and to work through them to instill Flemish nationalism in the masses. It was also in this period that a group of the more advanced Flemish nationalists founded the National Flemish Association[41] in order to study Flanders' problems and to rally Flemings of all political tendencies to its colors. Within this society there was a group, the *Vlaamsche Volksraad,* which met regularly to debate and to issue statements on questions pertinent to the Flemish movement. It endeavored to be an unofficial Flemish parliament and as such was a stepping stone to a more important body of the later War period, the Council of Flanders.[42]

A common feature of nearly all the national movements of the nineteenth century was the creation of societies for the purpose of uniting all the members of a given nationality. As such the Pan-Slav Congresses and the Pan-German League were striking examples. The Netherlandish nationality did not fall short in establishing analogous organizations. We have already noted the existence of the Netherlandish Language and

[40] P. Fredericq, *op. cit.,* v. III, pp. 332-335. The headquarters were located at first in Antwerp but later were moved to Brussels.

[41] *Nationaal Vlaamsch Verbond.* Its headquarters were in Brussels.

[42] Fr. Reinhard, *Algemeen verslag over de werking van het Nationaal Verbond. 1891-1911.* Louvain: De Vlaamsche Drukkerij. 1912.

Literary Congresses.[43] These congresses served as annual *rendezvous* for those who were interested in strengthening the mutual ties of Netherlandish language and literature between Holland and Flanders. The organization was reponsible, as we have seen, for an admirable Netherlandish dictionary that did much to unify the language of the North and South.

In course of time more advanced elements in Flanders felt the need of a closer and stronger union among Netherlandish intellectuals. Hippoliet Meert, a teacher at Ypres, grew fearful that the Netherlandish language was threatened with extinction not only in Flanders, but also in South Africa, the Dutch East Indies, and even in Holland. He made a study of the question and of the organization of the *Alliance Française* and of the Pan-German League and decided that Dutch civilization demanded a similar society. He secured the support of a number of Flemish and Dutch intellectuals who aided him in realizing his dream. In 1897 the Pan-Netherlandish League[44] was founded and soon became an important factor in Netherlandish affairs. President Kruger of the Boer Republic was one of its earliest representatives in South Africa, and in Flanders and Holland it attracted outstanding intellectuals.[45]

The formal activity of the Pan-Netherlandish League was strictly confined to cultural matters, notwithstanding the sporadic utterances of its more fiery members

[43] See above, pp. 78-79.

[44] *Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond.*

[45] Among its Dutch members may be mentioned Dr. J. te Winkel, famous literary critic and author of *De Ontwikkelingsgang der nederlandsche Letterkunde* (1908), and the Dutch historian, Dr. J. P. Blok.

concerning political affairs. It endeavored to improve and facilitate the instruction of Netherlandish abroad, sponsored summer courses in Holland, arranged for the exchange of professors, and managed the distribution of Netherlandish books, papers, and propaganda. Its official organ, *Neerlandia,* was a source for Netherlandish world news and Netherlandish propaganda.[46]

Another method by which an interest for Flemish culture was aroused among the Flemish people was by university extension lectures. These were introduced into Flanders in 1892. The first extension lectures were given by professors of the University of Ghent in the city of Ghent itself. In the following year courses were begun in the larger cities of East and West Flanders. The Catholic University of Louvain adopted a plan of university extension in 1898 and chose Antwerp as its main field. Even the Free (Liberal) University of Brussels, which was a stronghold of the French language, organized Flemish courses as early as 1894 through the efforts of L. De Raet. From 1894 to 1904 355 courses (a slight majority being in French), comprising 1,800 lessons and attended by 55,000 people, were held under its auspices. All such lectures not only played an important rôle in popularizing knowledge but at the same time offered Flamingant professors an excellent opportunity to do missionary work.[47]

[46] C. Van Son, "De Geschiedenis van het Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond" in the *Gedenkboek van het Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond.* Amsterdam: Wereldbiliotheek. 1923. pp. 19-43.

[47] For example, A. Vermeylen gave lectures on Flemish art in the Extension of the University of Brussels and Professor MacLeod was one of the leaders in the movement at Ghent. They took advantage of their lectures to preach Flemish nationalism.

The propagation of patriotic sentiment in every national movement has been aided by a number of trappings—flags, songs, and holidays. We have already mentioned the Flemish flag and the Flemish anthem—both the direct inspiration of Conscience's romantic novel, the *Lion of Flanders*. This book was also largely responsible for the Flemish "national holiday," for it made popular the date of the Battle of the Golden Spurs, July 11, 1302, the day on which the artisans of Bruges under Breidel and De Coninck defeated the courtly warriors of Philip the Fair. Before the influence of Conscience's book was felt, July 11 had meant practically nothing to the Flemings, but toward the close of the nineteenth century it began to take on importance and Breidel and De Coninck began to be regarded as Flemish heroes. In 1867 a commission was formed at Bruges for the purpose of erecting a monument to the two men. By 1885 the necessary money had been collected and plans were made for a Breidel-De Coninck festival on July 11, 1887. Trouble between the commission and the municipal administration led to the appointment of a new commission whose members decided to hold the festival on August 15. The result was that two celebrations were held. The first, an unofficial one, was the more popular and the more Flemish. Thousands of people—5,000 from Ghent alone—marched by the statue. *The Flemish Lion* was sung again and again. A French Flemish paper reported, "everyone's soul burned with the same fire; one cried, one embraced one's friends. Never has a similar sight been seen at the dedication of a statue. One has here a living page, a remembrance from the magnificent and heroic struggle." The official celebration on August 15, at

which Leopold II was the principal orator, was a miserable failure in comparison with the former event. The speeches were in French; little enthusiasm was displayed. July 11 had become the date of another victory.

But the Battle of the Golden Spurs was not universally celebrated in Flanders until a few years later. The six hundredth anniversary of the victory was fêted with great enthusiasm in 1902. A monument representing the Maid of Flanders with the Flemish Lion at her side and a fallen French knight at her feet was erected at Courtrai in commemoration of the battle. At that time the popularity of July 11 was assured, and since 1902 the day has been recognized generally as Flanders' "national" holiday.

Reaction in Belgium Against the Flemish Movement, 1870-1914

The awakening of the Flemings to a consciousness that they had a language and a culture that should be defended and protected from the encroachments of French civilization caused apprehension to Belgians who advocated the supremacy of French culture. They looked with distrustful eyes on the political agitation of the Flemings for linguistic reforms. They saw with dismay the growth of a Flemish culture and the increasing love that the people expressed for their Netherlandish tongue. Cultural *rapprochements* with Holland were received with still greater anxiety. The result was an increased propaganda to instil in the people a love for Belgium.

Brussels, on the linguistic border between Wallonia and Flanders, has been the center of Belgian patriotism,

and the influence of the capital has done much to maintain a love for the state. Its great newspapers—*Le Soir, La Nation Belge, La Libre Belgique,* etc.—are professedly patriotic journals. The University of Brussels is a center for Belgian sentiment. And the government has done much to weld the people together into a unit.[48]

Publicists and historians have endeavored to show that the existence of Belgium is most natural. One of Belgium's outstanding publicists, Emile de Laveleye, maintained in his work on political science, *Le Gouvernement dans la democratie,* that there were secondary and primary nationalities. A secondary nationality is based on ethnographic similarities, and a primary nationality is based on a love of liberty, a glorious past, common interests, and a similarity of customs. This theory made a place for a Belgian nationality and at the same time left room for the Flemish movement, which he was inclined to favor. According to him, the Flemings formed a secondary nationality, but all the Belgians (Flemings included) belonged to a primary nationality.[49]

The most famous defender of the idea of "Belgian nationality" has been the historian, Henri Pirenne. In the preface to the first edition of his *Histoire de Belgique* (1900) he explained his theory of Belgian his-

[48] For instance, article five of the law of 1884 on primary education stipulated that the instructor should not neglect any occasion to inculcate in his students "precepts of morality, to inspire them with a sense of duty, the love of country, and a respect for national institutions. . . ." *Moniteur,* September 20, 1884.

[49] *Le Gouvernement dans la democratie.* Paris: Alcan. 1892. v. I, p. 58.

tory, which he claimed to be the basis of the Belgian nationality.

"Like our soil, which has been formed by the deposits of rivers coming from France and Germany, our national culture is a kind of syncretism wherein we find the geniuses of two races mixed together and modified by each other. This culture which comes from every direction has been most receptive. It is as open as our frontiers and one finds in it at its most glorious epochs a rich and harmonious collection of the best elements of the Franco-German civilization. It is in this admirable receptivity, in this rare aptitude of assimilation, that resides the originality of Belgium. It is in this way that Belgium has rendered such marked services to Europe and it is to this culture that she owes the possession of a common national life without effacing the individuality of the two races of which she is made." [50]

This point of view is the *leitmotif* in the work of Professor Pirenne. The success that his history has had in Belgium and in the world is most remarkable, and such success has been largely responsible for the general acceptance of his theory among the world's gilds of historians. But certainly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries there have been signs that the Belgian "melting pot" has failed to fuse the Germanic and Romance elements of her population.

Some Walloons have regarded the success of the Flemish movement with much less calm than Professor Pirenne. Some of them had in the middle of the nineteenth century become interested in the literature of the Walloon dialect. The *Société Liégeoise de Littérature Wallonne* was founded in 1858 but was reincorporated

[50] Third edition, Brussels: Lamertin. 1909. v. I, p. 11.

as the *Société de Littérature Wallonne* in 1903. It did considerable to stimulate an interest in things Walloon as opposed to things Flemish.[51] The work of this society was fostered by others of a similar sort but of less importance.

Aside from the Walloon societies there were many writers who were distinctly Walloon-French and opposed to the increased prestige of Flemish literature. Albert Mockel, the editor of *La Wallonie,* a literary review, Hector Chainaye, Jules Destrée, Maurice Wilmotte, Maurice des Ombiaux, and Paul André are notable examples.[52] These men resented the taunts of the Flemings that the Walloons received their culture from Paris and that many very famous Belgian writers, such as Maurice Maeterlinck and Emile Verhaeren, were Flemings expressing themselves in French. The Walloons began to feel less sympathy for the Flemings and sought ever closer intellectual relations with France.

Finally this feeling of hostility on the part of the Walloons found a more positive expression. In 1888 some of the leaders decided that an organization should be formed to combat Flemish propaganda. The result was the creation of the *Société de Propagande Wallonne.* This was followed by *La Ligue Wallonne de Liége* (1897) which in 1912 acclaimed the idea of a political partition of Belgium along linguistic lines.[53]

[51] Jules Destrée, *Wallons et flamands. La Querelle linguistique en Belgique.* Paris: Plon-Nourrit. 1923. pp. 83, 84.
See also *Bulletins de la Société de Littérature Wallonne.* Liége, 1857-1922.

[52] J. Bithell, *Contemporary Belgian Literature.* New York: F. A. Stokes Co. p. 219. J. Destrée, *op. cit.,* p. 92.

[53] Destrée, *op. cit.,* p. 108.

The famous *Lettre au Roi sur la separation de la Wallonie et de la Flandre* written in 1912 by the Socialist deputy from Charleroi, Jules Destrée, and the establishment of the *Assemblée Wallonne,* an organization founded to centralize the pro-Walloon and anti-Flemish interests in Wallonia, give further proof of Walloon antipathy to the Flemish movement. Destrée's letter was a fiery outburst against *"une ame belge."* Outside of the official world and the *"agglomerat de métis"* (Brussels), Destrée maintained, there are no Belgians, only Walloons and Flemings. "No, Sire, there is no such thing as a Belgian soul. The fusion of Flemings and Walloons is not to be desired and, if one were to desire it, one would have to admit that it is not possible."[54]

A few Walloons shared such sentiments and in October, 1912, founded the Walloon Assembly at Charleroi. The first article of the Assembly's program stated that its *raison d'être* was the study and defense of Walloon interests. Although the Assembly expressed its willingness to maintain the "Belgian nationality," it declared that Belgian unity, based on the domination of one race over another, was impossible to preserve or to defend and affirmed that Belgium was not able to continue except by the union of the two peoples who compose her, a union based on reciprocal independence and made possible by a legal and cordial entente.[55] The society immediately established a propagandist organ, *La Défense Wallonne,* adopted a patriotic song, *Le*

[54] This letter was published in the *Revue de Belgique,* August, 1912. Destrée had changed his ideas by 1923. See Destrée, *op. cit.,* p. 19.

[55] Destrée, *Wallons et Flamands.* pp. 109, 110.

Chant de la Wallonie, created a flag, its design being a red cock on a yellow background accompanied by the words *Liberté* and *Wallon Toujours,* and decided upon a "national" holiday, a day being selected to commemorate the revolutionary days of 1830 when Wallonia wrested her freedom from the "Netherlandish tyrant."[56]

Of such a nature was the extreme reaction in Wallonia against the Flemish movement. Of course, only a small group of men joined in this reaction and many of them later became less rabid, notably Jules Destrée himself. There was, however, in Wallonia a general antipathy toward the Flemish movement. When the Flamingants in parliament endeavored to pass linguistic reform bills, Walloon political leaders were certain to oppose the measures and usually secured a substantial modification of them before they were enacted into law. As a result Flemings were sometimes dissatisfied with the linguistic legislation which was effected from 1870 to 1914.[57] But their political struggles with the Walloons reflect the nationalist sympathies of the two sections of Belgium.

[56] *Ibid.,* p. 115.

[57] See Fernand Daumont, *Le Mouvement flamand, ses raisons d'être.* Brussels: Société Belge de Librairie. 1911. 2 vols. Although Daumont attempted to produce a serious study of the Flemish question, he was very partial and inaccurate and for these reasons I have not quoted from his book. He did, however, give a very good statement of the Flemish point of view.

CHAPTER V

The Flemish Movement In Politics, 1870-1914

Political Parties and the Flemish Movement, 1870-1914

During the early years of Belgium's existence both the Catholic and the Liberal parties participated in Gallicizing Belgium. As the Flemish movement increased in importance, however, these two parties were practically forced to take a stand regarding the Flemish question. The process of transformation was very slow and gradual, but by the eighteen-sixties a change in attitude could be distinguished. It became apparent that the Liberal Party, the party of the French speaking bourgeoisie, usually opposed the demands of the Flamingants, while the Catholic Party, to which the mass of the Flemings were affiliated, took a more favorable, although by no means enthusiastic, attitude toward the Flemish question. It would be an error, however, to suppose that the Flemish movement became a strictly party issue; it continued to cut across party lines. The higher clergy, French in language and culture, opposed and has always opposed the Flemish movement and Walloon Catholics have on the whole seen no good in it. On the other hand, there has always been a small group of Liberal Flemings who have been actively engaged in Flemish propaganda and

whose Flemish views have coincided with those of Catholic Flamingants.[1]

The general attitude of the Catholic and Liberal parties became clearly defined in the period from 1870 to 1914.[2] During the Ministry of Jules Malou (Catholic) from 1871 to 1878 when the first important linguistic reforms were made, there were only two Liberals in the Chamber from the Flemish provinces; the deputies who represented the cause of the Flamingants were Catholics. In the elections of 1878, the Liberals were victorious and they formed the so-called "Great Liberal Ministry" under Frère-Orban and Bara. During the life of this Government, very little was done to satisfy Flemish demands. Particular emphasis was placed on the realization of the Liberal doctrine of public lay education. This policy antagonized the Catholic population of Belgium in general and added to the government's expenses. In two years, the national deficit rose from six to twenty-five million francs, an increase which was in part caused by the cost of the school program. In the elections of 1884, the Liberal Party was decisively defeated because of its anti-Catholic educational policies and its large expendi-

[1] *Het Volksbelang,* a Liberal Flamingant paper, printed (June 20, 1874) the following reflections on the elections of 1874: "A fact that everyone must have noticed, Liberals and Clericals, Flemings and Walloons, is that by the last election Belgium is politically divided into Catholic Flemish and Liberal Walloon districts. This is very apparent. It is as deplorable as it is certain. . . ."

[2] Deputies to the Chamber were elected for terms of four years. Half of their number were elected every two years. Senators were elected for terms of eight years. Half of their number were elected every four years. This system has remained in force to the present time.

tures.[3] Except for a block of eight deputies from Ghent, among whom there was only one Flamingant, not a single Liberal was elected at that time from the Flemish provinces.

Flemish Liberals seemed much perturbed about the future of their party. In January, 1885, the leaders—Jan Van Beers, Vuylsteke, Paul Fredericq, and Hoste—organized a union of Flemish Liberal Associations.[4] Despite their efforts, the Liberals elected only two members to the national legislature from the Flemish provinces in the elections of June, 1886. Moved by the miserable electoral failure of their party in Flanders, the leaders issued a forceful public letter in December, 1886, upbraiding the Liberal Party as a whole for having published its propaganda in the Flemish provinces in French. The need of using the mother tongue in such matters was pointed out.

"We have found unfortunately the most ardent opponents of the Flemish linguistic rights in the Liberal press, on the left wing of our legislative chambers, in the ranks of our political brothers. . . . To the Liberals of the whole land, Walloons as well as Flemings, who have not yet supported our movement, we address these words: Be no longer the inveterate enemies or uninterested observers of our political linguistic strife. Study the conditions of the Flemish provinces and the

[3] The Flamingant Coremans of Antwerp commented on the election in the *Journal de Bruxelles* (June 12, 1884) as follows: "What characterizes the victory is the triumph of the Flemish national cause. Bruges has returned a real Flemish deputy rather than a French one. Fransquillonism, the French party, has been replaced by a national party. Enormous forces have been won today. We have never before carried Antwerp by 1,500."

[4] *Verbond der Vlaamsche Liberale Vereenigingen.*

purpose of the Flemish movement. Above all, do not think that it is with mockery or misunderstanding, which provokes proud and arrogant contempt, that one can prevent a nation which is struggling for its dearest right from fulfilling its duty.

"Be convinced of this truth, above all you who are in the parliament, who are interested in the press, who belong to political societies and associations, you who have an influence with pen or word, be convinced of this truth that Francophilism in the Flemish provinces is the death of Liberalism, the Catholicizing of the land. By the witchcraft of the mother tongue shall Liberalism in Flanders again become the glory of all Belgium."

This document sounds like the call of a lost cause. And as time went on, it became more and more evident that the Liberal Party could not be won to the support of Flemish reforms. On the other hand, it became increasingly common to consider the Catholic Party as the champion of the Flemish cause. This is of particular significance in view of the fact that the Catholic Party was in power continuously from 1884 to 1914.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century two new groups, the Socialist and the Christian Democratic, came to complicate the political situation in Belgium. The former, founded in 1885, grew rapidly and established solid political organizations at Ghent, Brussels, Liége, and other industrial centers as well as important producing and marketing coöperative enterprises such as the "Vooruit" at Ghent. At first it devoted its whole attention to economic and social problems and displayed little interest in the Flemish question. Edward Anseele, the Socialist leader at Ghent, informed the Flamingants

that he was more interested in "questions of beefsteak than in questions of language." Nevertheless many of the Socialist leaders were Flemings and were sympathetic toward the Flemish movement. Among these were Anseele himself and Kamiel Huysmans, the latter well known for his activity in international labor circles. By the force of circumstances the Socialists in Flanders came to favor the linguistic demands of the common people. On the contrary Walloon leaders of the Socialist Party, Vandervelde and Destrée, opposed the Flemish movement, at least in many of its demands, and remained champions of French culture and of the French language. The Socialist Party as a whole agreed, however, that although Belgium was a "nation," it was composed of two "nationalities," each of which should be allowed to develop in its own way.[5]

While the followers of Karl Marx were organizing for political action in Belgium, the adherents to the doctrines of Bishop von Ketteler and other Social Catholics were organizing themselves as the Christian Democratic Party. Like the Socialists they were primarily concerned with the problems of the working class, but they insisted that such problems could be satisfactorily solved only on the basis of Christian teachings and with the aid of the Catholic Church. The Christian Democrats in Belgium were led by a Flemish priest, Father Daens of Aalst. He considered the linguistic problem to be a vital one for the common people

[5] Kamiel Huysmans in a parliamentary speech said, "Gentlemen, I believe that the Socialist group is one in its conception of nation and nationalities and the Honorable M. Destrée like myself has often supported the idea that Belgium constitutes one nation but that it is composed of two nationalities." *Annales parlementaires.* May 23, 1913. p. 1320.

and regretted the fact that the social classes in Flanders were divided by a cultural and linguistic barrier. He consistently supported every attempt at Flemish reforms, while his brother at one time suggested that Flamingant deputies form a group in the Chamber to work for Flemish ends.[6]

In harmony with the democratic spirit of the times, the latter part of the nineteenth century was marked by an intensive campaign for universal suffrage in Belgium; it was indeed the outstanding issue in internal politics between 1887 and 1893. Many had been the criticisms of the original electoral system, which had accorded the suffrage only to such men as paid a direct tax of forty-two francs.[7] In 1870 this amount was reduced to twenty francs for provincial elections and to ten francs for municipal elections. The change did not satisfy the working classes and demonstrations, public mass meetings, and strikes were frequent between 1890 and 1893. At last the Chamber, intimidated by a general strike, began to deal seriously with suggestions for reform. The proposal for universal suffrage, pure and simple, was defeated (April 11, 1893), but a compromise was reached by creating a system of plural voting (April 18). Every male citizen over twenty-five years of age was given one vote and supplementary votes, not to exceed two, were given to those who met stated requirements—to fathers who paid a certain rent, to small proprietors, to capitalists, to university graduates, and to professional men. Special provisions made the vote obligatory and stipu-

[6] *Fredericq, op. cit.*, v. II, pp. 280, 281.

[7] Article 47 of the Constitution.

lated that the new system should apply to all elections.[8] According to this arrangement 60% of the electoral body had three votes, 23% two, and 17% one. The number of electors jumped from 135,000 to 1,370,687 and the number of votes to 2,111,127. In the first election (1894) under the new system 900,000 Catholic votes elected 104 deputies, 300,000 Socialist votes elected 28, and 500,000 Liberal votes elected 20.

The significance of this reform for the Flemish movement was immediately apparent. The extension of the suffrage to the lower classes strengthened the Catholic Party—the party on the whole favorable to the Flemish cause—and weakened the Liberal Party—the party of the Gallicized aristocracy. The Liberals, whose delegation to the Chamber was out of proportion to the popular vote it had received, were naturally discontented with this state of affairs and argued that the electoral law of 1893 should be supplemented by a provision for proportional representation—in its essence a democratic reform. They carried their demands to the Chamber and managed in 1899 to push through the desired legislation. Its effect was felt in the elections of 1900. Whereas in 1898 the Catholics had elected 112 deputies, the Liberals 12, and the Socialists 28, these parties were now represented by 86, 33, and 33 deputies, respectively. This change was significant as regards the Flemish movement, for it gave the Liberal Party, the group most hostile to the Flemish cause, a new lease on life; it strengthened the position of the Socialists; and it weakened the parlia-

[8] To be eligible for the Senate one had to pay at least 1,200 francs in direct taxes.

mentary power of the Catholics. In the course of time it led to the necessity of government by coalition with its accompanying compromises and frequent upsets. After the War, however, proportional representation proved to be of decided advantage to the Flamingants, inasmuch as it made possible the representation in the Chamber of small Flemish nationalist parties. On the whole it is probably just to conclude that the extension of the suffrage and proportional representation worked to the advantage of the Flemish movement.

Legislation Concerning the Use of Flemish in the Courts

After the defeat of the Liberals in 1870 and the creation of the Jules Malou Ministry in 1871, Flamingants thought that the time had come for effecting linguistic reforms. In truth the political situation seemed more favorable to the Flemish cause than it had since the time of William I. Therefore the Flemish leaders gathered their forces and set about securing legislation for the use of the Flemish language in public affairs. Their first care was to place Flemish on an equal footing with French in law courts, thus attacking one of the major Flemish grievances. On April 13, 1872, one of the Catholic majority in the Chamber, Edward Coremans, deputy from Antwerp, presented a bill calling for the use of Flemish by the courts of Flanders.

This bill might have been buried in the files of the Chamber, if popular agitation had not forced the issue. The case of Jozef Schoep of Brussels, a Flemish worker, made it apparent that something had to be

done. This man was fined fifty francs for refusing to register the birth of a child because officials would not let him use Flemish and he did not know French. Indignant at the sentence, he brought his case before the Court of Appeals at Brussels. When the trial began, his lawyer asked the privilege of speaking Flemish, a demand which was granted upon the condition that the entire proceedings be translated sentence by sentence. The ruling caused considerable irritation which increased to anger when the Court decided against Schoep. The case was then carried to the Court of Cassation, Belgium's highest judicial body. Here pleas to use Flemish were refused, a ruling which was given great publicity because one of Belgium's leading lawyers, Edmond Picard, who had joined the defense, upbraided the Court for its decision. All this litigation was to no avail; Schoep was defeated for the third time.[9]

Petitions began to rain on the Chamber; they bore the signatures of more than 100,000 people.[10] Seventy-five members of the bar of Ghent addressed a letter to the Chamber requesting that action be taken to permit the use of Flemish before the courts (May, 1873).[11] In June, 1872 about 8,000 delegates from Flemish societies met in Brussels to demonstrate in favor of the Coremans Bill. They marched through the streets singing, "They shall never tame him, the fiery Flemish

[9] For a good account of the trial before the Court of Appeals see *Het Handelsblad,* March 16, 1873, and before the Court of Cassation, *De Zweep,* May 18, 1873.

[10] Statement made by Coremans. *Annales parlementaires.* July 23, 1873.

[11] See *De Zweep.* June 1, 1873.

Lion"; and they ended their *Landdag* by a meeting in which they demanded the right to use Flemish in judicial matters. They also adopted a resolution to the effect that no candidate for a public office should obtain their suffrages if a formal promise to support the Flemish program was not given.[12]

These incidents and these appeals awoke a certain amount of sympathy in the Chamber and the discussion of the Coremans Bill was begun. Feeling ran high between the Walloon-Liberals of the opposition and the Flemish-Catholics of the majority. After considerable trimming and amending, the bill was finally enacted into law (1873).[13] It was the first of a long series of linguistic reforms—the first success in the realization of the Flamingant program.

The law provided that in the provinces of East Flanders, West Flanders, Antwerp, and Limburg and in the arrondissement of Louvain procedure in *matière repressive* was to be in Flemish,[14] although defendants and witnesses might use French if they so desired;[15] that, if the law was violated, the verdict would be nullified; that in criminal cases the judge should demand of the defendant in what language he wished to be tried;[16] that the state be free to decide which language it would employ;[17] that both languages should

[12] See the accounts in *De Zweep*, July 5, and *L'Etoile Belge*, June 30, 1873.

[13] Published in the *Moniteur* August 26, 1873. A convenient collection of Belgian laws where the bill may be found is the annual *Recueil des lois*, an official publication.

[14] Article 1.

[15] Article 2.

[16] Article 6.

[17] Article 9.

be used in the Court of Correction in Brussels;[18] and that the *Code d'instruction criminelle* be translated into Flemish.[19] The law specifically stated that the Courts of Appeals at Brussels and Liége and implied that the Court of Cassation would continue to use French exclusively.[20]

The law was received by the Flemings with mingled emotions of joy and discontent. Many of the milder spirits among them rejoiced that so much had been won; that Flemish could now be used in the lower courts. But the more hardy Flamingants were disgruntled because the law did not exclude the use of French wherever Flemings might be concerned.[21] They continually criticized the law, finding fault with those judges who were unable to speak Flemish and with those who garbled it in an incomprehensible manner and complaining about the lax fashion in which the law was enforced.

As time went on, it became more and more evident that Flamingants thought the law of 1873 was a partial failure and sought its amendment.[22] The most serious obstacle to its proper functioning was, according to the report of a parliamentary commission of 1884, "the unjust preponderance of French in all state affairs,"

[18] Article 10.

[19] Article 12.

[20] Article 11.

[21] See the criticisms by Julius Vuylsteke in the *Jaarboek van het Willemsfonds* for 1879.

[22] Petition of the Bar of Ghent, November 25, 1881 in *Verslag over de werkzaamheden der Vlaamsche Conferentie gedurende 1881,* p. 23; of the Snellaertkring of Ghent, *Annales parlementaires, Session de 1880-1881,* p. 889; of the Willemsfonds, *Jaarboek van het Willemsfonds voor 1882,* p. 142; etc.

the inefficient teaching of Flemish, and the disdain with which Flemish was usually regarded.[23] The report showed that Flemish had been used in only 30% of the cases tried in Ghent since 1873, in only 20% in Turnhout, in 10% in Antwerp, in 10% in Furnes, and in 3% in Audenaerde.[24]

In 1884 two bills, intended to remove the existing difficulties, were presented by both Liberal and Catholic groups in the Chamber.[25] For four years little heed was taken of these documents, but finally in 1888 the national legislature reluctantly decided to consider them.[26] Immediately Flemings and Walloons took opposite sides. For a month the conflict raged back and forth, but when the matter came to a final vote the Flamingants carried the day, 71 to 25.[27] The seventy-one votes represented Catholic Flemings exclusively; the twenty-five, Liberals and Catholic Walloons. The measure was soon approved by the Senate and on May 3, 1889, it received the King's signature. The law provided for the use of Netherlandish in the courts of Flemish towns and for the use of the same language by the state as that chosen by the defendant.[28]

[23] *Annales parlementaires.* December 10, 1885.

[24] *Annales parlementaires.* March 4, 1884.

[25] The Liberal bill was presented February 29, 1884 before the fall of the Great Liberal Ministry and bore the signatures of De Vigne of Ghent, De Wael, Burgomaster of Antwerp, Buls, Burgomaster of Brussels, Lippens, Burgomaster of Ghent, and Van Wambeke, Burgomaster of Aalst. The Catholic bill was presented by Coremans in April.

[26] November 22, 1888.

[27] December 21, 1888.

[28] Decrees of May 3, 1889, May 31, 1891, and January 10, 1896 designated which towns were to be considered Flemish.

The laws of 1873 and 1889 effected the most important reforms concerning the use of Flemish in the courts, but little by little further changes were made to place Flemish on a par with French in legal matters. In 1891 the bi-lingual régime was extended to include the Courts of Appeals of Brussels and Liége;[29] a few years later (1908) the law of 1889 was applied to the courts of the arrondissement of Brussels;[30] in 1925 an official Netherlandish translation was made of the Belgian Constitution;[31] and in the same year a commission was appointed to provide an official translation of all Belgian codes.[32]

But despite all these reforms many of the Flemings were not satisfied with the existing régime, maintaining that anti-Flemish judges were continually breaking the letter and the spirit of the laws and that many of them did not have an adequate knowledge of Flemish. Belgium was confronted with a situation almost inevitable in a centralized bi-lingual state.

Legislation Concerning the Use of Flemish in Governmental Affairs

Flamingants were not only concerned with the use of Flemish in courts but also with its use in all public affairs. During the Malou Ministry from 1871 to 1878 they bent their efforts to secure linguistic reform

[29] Law published in the *Moniteur* September 20, 1891.

[30] *Moniteur.* March 1, 1908.

[31] *Moniteur.* December 19, 1925.

[32] The commission has not yet completed its task (1927).

in administrative matters.[33] The cry of "In Flanders, Flemish" was continually repeated. In 1876 the Meetingist De Laet presented in the Chamber a bill which stipulated that in Flanders the municipalities, provinces, and central government should use the language of the people, but that a citizen who did not know Netherlandish should be privileged to demand a French translation of any document.[34] For two years this bill remained in commission, but the report concerning it which was finally submitted to the Chamber was most favorable.

"Language constitutes one of the most vital elements of a people. When one demands linguistic rights, one demands the rights of a nation. . . . For half a century the Flemings have supported with patriotic abnegation a painful situation. . . . Peoples are not made for governments, but governments are made for peoples and one of the primary rights of families and of municipalities is to live in a national atmosphere, that is, to be governed and to be administered in their mother tongue." [35]

Still the Chamber hesitated. The Liberal deputies opposed the bill, for all but two were from Wallonia.

[33] Notice the articles published in *De Zweep, Het Volksbelang, De Kerels,* and *Het Handelsblad* reproduced in Th. Coopman and Jan Broeckaert, *Bibliographie van den Vlaamschen taalstrijd.* Ghent: Vlaamsch Academie. 1904-1908. *loc. cit.* A mass of similar documents covering the years 1786-1886 are available in the eight volumes of this series.

[34] *Annales parlementaires.* April 6, 1876. p. 670.

[35] *Annales parlementaires.* February 28, 1878. pp. 190 *et seq.* This was a remarkable report. Its author, E. De Decker, traced a very clear history of the Flemish movement in the introduction to the report.

The Catholic majority wavered, for Belgium was on the verge of an election and it was feared that the Flemish question would play political havoc. But Flamingants were insistent. Non-parliamentary Flemish Liberals urged the members of their party in the Chamber to take action so that the Catholics would not reap all the honors if the bill were passed.[36] Petitions from all over Flanders reached the national legislature.[37] It was evident that a policy of *laisser faire* would not still the troubled waters. Therefore consideration of the bill was finally begun. On the very first day of debate an action which has characterized the passage of almost every law in favor of the Flemish language was taken by the Walloons; the bill was so modified by amendments that it lost the greater part of its importance. Provisions concerning the use of Flemish by municipalities and provinces were struck out on the ground that too great inroads were being made into the powers of local government.[38] Flemish Catholics valiantly defended the original measure; Flemish Liberals appealed again and again to their party to support the Flemish cause; but it was all in vain. Feeling was so bitter that Premier Malou was led to exclaim, "It was with patriotic disconcertion that I saw this debate approach. It would be a permanent, national, and all-important danger to continue a discussion which can only result in creating a most fatal division between us. . . ." [39] At last the mangled bill

[36] Text published in *De Zweep*. April 21, 1878.

[37] The *Annales parlementaires* record that the Chamber received fifteen on May 2 and fifty on May 7.

[38] *Annales parlementaires*. May 3, 1878.

[39] *Annales parlementaires*. May 8, 1878.

was voted unanimously amidst the general criticism of the Flemish press.[40]

The new law stipulated that in the provinces of Antwerp, East Flanders, West Flanders, Limburg, and the arrondissement of Louvain notices and communications which state officials might address to the people should be in Flemish, or in French and Flemish, and that governmental correspondence with Flemish communes and individuals should be in Flemish unless otherwise requested.[41] A special régime was provided for Brussels where the correspondence of the state with communes and individuals was to be in French unless special demands were made for Flemish.

This law left much to be desired by the Flemings. They grieved that they had failed to secure the application of the law to provincial and communal affairs; they regretted that no punishment had been provided for infractions of the law; and they desired that Flemish be put on an equal basis with French in the state administrative departments.

Although it was a long time before Flemish secured further advantages in matters of administration,[42] the general position occupied by that language in public affairs improved. Following the extension of the suffrage in 1893 the use of Flemish in the Chamber increased. Democratic reform brought to the national legislature a number of Flemings who had never completely mastered French. In 1894 forty-eight of the sixty-five deputies from the Flemish provinces took

[40] The Senate voted the bill unanimously, May 14, 1878. The text was published in the *Moniteur*, May 22, 1878.

[41] Article 1.

[42] See below, pp. 232-234.

their oaths in Flemish rather than in French. In the aristocratic Senate where Flemish had never before been used for taking the oath thirty-seven of the sixty Senators from Flanders pledged their fidelity to Belgium in Netherlandish. These acts, of small importance in themselves, signified the care which the national legislators took to show their Flemish constitutents that they approved the use of the mother tongue. Some of the deputies claimed the right to speak in Netherlandish in order that they might clearly express their views and demanded that interpreters be employed to make translations. This claim gave rise to several heated debates in which the old Catholic Flamingant parliamentarian Coremans, the Socialist Anseele, and the Christian Democrat Father Daens led the Flemish forces.[43] From time to time Flemish was used in the Chamber though not often, for the Walloons could not be won to the support of certain measures, if they could not understand the arguments presented. Only a small group, headed by Juliaan De Vriendt, used Flemish consistently and then only out of a sense of devotion to the Flemish cause.

The growth of democratic ideas and the increased interest in governmental affairs on the part of the lower classes led to other changes. The *Moniteur,* the organ in which laws and decrees are published, began to appear in both Netherlandish and French.[44] In 1888

[43] See *Annales parlementaires* for November 16, December 21, 1894, January 15 and August 28, 1895.

[44] Such a reform should have been made much earlier in compliance with the law of 1878 which had provided that all notices sent to the public in Flanders should be in Netherlandish or in Netherlandish and French.

the title had become bi-lingual—*Moniteur-Staatsblad*—but it was not until March 3, 1895, that the text appeared in both Flemish and French.

Still other events occurred which indicated that an attempt was being made to satisfy the demands of the Flemings. In August, 1885 an announcement was made in the Senate that the government was going to print the bonds for a new loan in both French and Flemish. The next year [45] the Government stated that in the minting of some new currency both languages were to be used, a reform which became law in 1900.[46] In 1891 French and Flemish inscriptions began to appear on postage stamps and after a short time the rubber stamps used to cancel these stamps became bilingual. In 1887 inscriptions on government buildings in Brussels began to be changed to French and Flemish, and Flemings could rejoice that the Ministry of the Interior was no longer *Ministère de l'Intérieure* but *Ministère de l'Intérieure—Ministerie van Binnenlandsche Zaken.* It was also during this period that provision was made that the names of streets and of towns should appear officially in the two languages.

Another indication of the solicitude of Flamingants for Flemish was their attempt to raise their language to the position of a fully official tongue. The original texts of laws were considered to be the ones in French; the ones in Flemish were looked upon as mere translations. When fine legal points were at issue, recourse was always had to the French versions and it often happened that Flemings were dissatisfied with deci-

[45] April 4, 1886.

[46] *Moniteur.* August 18, 1900. The charter of La Banque Nationale was extended at this time.

sions which were handed down by judges who ignored the Flemish texts. There was a real demand to have the interpretation of laws depend as much on their Flemish as on their French versions. So a bill was prepared which provided that Flemish be regarded as an official Belgian tongue. This implied that Parliament would discuss and vote a Flemish and a French text for every law and that courts would be required to respect the one as much as the other. The Chamber approved these provisions, but the Senate, an august, conservative, and bourgeois body, refused to accept them.[47]

The Senate's action was the signal for popular demonstrations in Flanders in favor of the bill—for mass meetings, press campaigns, and petitions to the Chamber. Moreover, it gave the Flemish deputies of the various parties the needed incentive to unite their forces in the common cause. The Flamingant leaders of the four parties appeared together on the platform of the Flemish theater in Brussels to address a crowd concerning the measure.[48] There was no mistaking the meaning of such events; the Flemish masses insisted on having the bill passed. The Chamber once more approved it[49] and the Senate, sensitive to such rebukes and fearful that it might antagonize its constitutents on the eve of the impending elections, ac-

[47] February 5, 1897.

[48] The throng which attempted to attend this meeting was so large that it was necessary to have part of it adjourn to neighboring cafés where impromptu orators spoke about the pending legislation.

[49] March 18, 1898. The vote was 99 in favor of the measure, 19 against it, and 4 abstentions.

quiesced in the demands of the majority and passed the measure by a vote of 217 to 39, with 3 abstentions. Thus, on April 15, 1898, Flemish took its place beside French as an official language of Belgium.

Legislation Concerning the Use of Flemish in Education

As the Flamingant platform took shape, it was recognized that education in the Flemish language was vital to the ultimate success of the Flemish movement. The minimum demands concerning education comprised the thorough teaching of Flemish and the teaching of all other Germanic languages by means of that tongue. The maximum demand envisaged the exclusive use of Flemish in the lower classes but the gradual introduction of French in the higher ones.

During the Great Liberal Ministry when educational reform was the issue of the day, Coremans (Catholic) and Julius De Vigne (Liberal) each presented bills which incorporated the maximum program (April, 1881). These bills were referred to a committee and reported back favorably by a Walloon in 1882. "The agitation which is known as the Flemish movement has as its source legitimate aspirations. . . . We do not hesitate to recognize the necessity of using more frequently the Flemish language in the different branches of instruction. . . ." [50]

After considerable discussion the educational law of 1883 was passed.[51] It stipulated that in the Flemish part of the country courses in the preparatory sections

[50] *Annales parlementaires.* Session of 1882. p. 109.

[51] Published in the *Moniteur,* June 17, 1883.

of public secondary schools should be given in Flemish, but that French should be thoroughly taught so as to enable students to continue their studies in French.[52] In public secondary schools Flemish, English, and German were to be taught in Flemish until the pupils had advanced to the stage where the language itself might be used for instruction. After 1886 at least two other courses were to be given in Flemish. The ones usually selected were history, geography, and natural science.[53] The terminology of mathematics and natural science as well as of other subjects in the curriculum was to be given simultaneously in French and in Flemish.[54] Permission was, however, given for the creation of courses in French for students who could not profit from Flemish instruction.[55]

Radical Flamingants and the Flemish press in general considered this law "still born"; it provided for far less than they had demanded.[56] Its application proved very difficult, for qualified teachers of Flemish

[52] Article 1.

[53] Article 2.

[54] Article 4.

[55] In the *Athenées* attended by the sons of the Gallicized bourgeoisie demands were made that instruction be given in French. The following table will show the relative importance of the French sections in some of the Flemish cities for 1922-1923.

Total Number of Students	*City*	*French Section*	*Flemish Section*
922	Antwerp	229	693
442	Louvain	113	329
312	Tirlemont	124	188
452	Ostend	139	313
410	Ghent	113	297

[56] See *Gazette van Gent*, February 2, 1883 and *De Vlaamsche Standaard*, February 5, 1883.

were few and there was not enough good will in the administration to enforce it. In order to overcome the former obstacle a Flemish Normal Section [57] was created in the University of Ghent, an action [58] which was exceedingly important, for it marked a step towards making Ghent a Flemish institution. But efforts to overcome the latter difficulty were not so fruitful. Ministerial orders and inspections were not very effective. Three years later, an interpellation of the Ministry concerning it led to a heated debate (November 30, 1886), which ended as debates on linguistic questions often did end in the Belgian Chamber by someone's quoting the following words: *"Flamand, Wallon, sont des prénoms, Belge est notre nom de famille."* The Flamingants were not content with the situation and continued to demand further reform.[59]

Although the struggle for the use of Flemish in state secondary schools was important, one should notice that in 1883 there were five times as many pupils in private Catholic institutions as in state schools in the Flemish provinces.[60] Conditions in the private schools were worse from a Flemish point of view than those in the public establishments. The former were directed by the higher clergy and the higher clergy was French

[57] *Vlaamsche Normale Afdeeling.*

[58] Ministerial order of December 7, 1883.

[59] In 1905 (July 15) a Flemish paper, *Het Volksbelang,* printed an article concerning the application of the law. It reported that the law was observed only in Antwerp, although conditions in Ghent and Bruges were not bad. In Mechlin, Hasselt, Tongeren, and Ostend they were poor, and in Louvain, Brussels, and Elsene they were very unsatisfactory.

[60] Fredericq, *Geschiedenis der Vlaamsche beweging.* v. III, p. 45.

in language and culture. Hence the French language was used exclusively for instruction. If Netherlandish was taught at all, not more than two hours a week were devoted to it and it was customary to teach it by means of French. In most places pupils were forbidden to speak Flemish during play hours and if they did so they were punished.[61] Both teachers and pupils who became Flamingants were usually discharged.

It was only natural that Catholic Flamingants protested against this situation. In 1877-1878 a few students of the Flamingant society at the University of Louvain, *Met Tijd en Vlijt,* sent a letter to their bishop asking that a change be made.[62] Thenceforth criticism of the situation and pleas for reforms were frequent. The question was discussed at meetings of the *Davidsfonds* and the prevailing conditions were made known to the Flemish people. Flamingant students at their congresses voted as a minimum the application of the law of 1883 to private schools. They founded reviews to further their purposes—*De Vlaamsche Vlagge* (1875); *De Student* (1880); and the Liberal *De Goedendag* (1892). But the agitation was of no avail. In April, 1892 Cardinal Gossens of Mechlin forbade the students of Catholic schools to "read, borrow, or propagate such publications as have appeared in the last few years which, under the pretext of zeal for the Flemish cause, gravely attack respect of authority. . . . These measures have been taken in your interests, dear students. . . . It will be a real joy for me to know that

[61] See the report in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* of a Flemish Congress held September 5, 1885, at Antwerp to discuss this situation.

[62] Albrecht Rodenbach was the sponsor of this move.

students arduously desire to obey the religious authority and those who represent that authority as they obey God himself."[63] This remained the attitude of the higher clergy before the War.[64]

Attempts on the part of the state to legislate concerning the use of languages in private schools met many obstacles. On three different occasions Coremans tried to secure legislation for the application of the law of 1883 to private schools. Each time the Chamber defeated his plan on the ground that the use of languages in Belgium was free and that any state interference in private institutions would be unconstitutional.[65] In search for a solution a commission composed of representatives of all parties was formed. After long sessions and discouraging debates a compromise was reached in 1910. It provided that every student who desired to enter a university for a degree should pass an examination in modern languages. Those who had had their secondary education in Flanders should be examined in Flemish and in either French, German, or English, while those who had studied French in Wallonia should be examined in French and in either Flemish, German, or English. Flemish students might be dispensed from this examination if they had had courses (or eight hours of work a week) in Flemish and three hours a week in French, German, or English. Walloon students were exempted if they could show that they

[63] Printed in *Het Volksbelang.* February 11, 1905.

[64] For instance, this was the attitude of Cardinal Mercier (see the *Voix de Malines,* June 10, 1906) and of Bishop Waffelaert of Bruges (see *Ons Recht* for April, 1905).

[65] December 23, 1889; February 14, 1894; and August 9, 1901-June 27, 1907.

had devoted eight hours a week to French and three hours to Flemish, German, or English. Special provisions were made for Brussels where the requirements depended on the mother tongue (or usual language) of students, the father of the child having the right to declare what that language was in any particular instance.

This bill was, it may seem, of small importance. It did not alter the situation in the Walloon provinces at all nor that in the public schools in Flanders. It was aimed solely at forcing Flemish on Catholic institutions in Flanders. Despite its limited scope it was the subject of debate for months. Both Walloons and Flemings argued desperately for their respective languages. The former accused the latter of desiring the partition of Belgium. The latter claimed that the Walloons were interfering in affairs that were not theirs. The press was equally divided, although some of the Flemish Catholic papers did not support the bill with much enthusiasm because they did not like to see the state dictating what should be done in private schools. Despite opposition the bill was passed and published in the *Moniteur,* May 15, 1910.[66]

Whereas the linguistic situation in secondary education was criticized sharply by the Flamingants, that in elementary schools was the object of relatively mild attacks. Following the overthrow of the Great Liberal Ministry in 1884 an education bill was put through Parliament which proved satisfactory for the time being. Every municipality was required to support at least one school and provision was made whereby town-

[66] This law was explained but not altered in 1919. See *Moniteur* for February 3, 1919.

ships might fulfill the obligation by "adopting" already existing Catholic institutions, that is, by aiding them financially. The matter of religious instruction in public schools was settled by leaving such instruction optional.[67] Such a solution was agreeable to the population of Flanders, pleased to have the advantages of elementary education and happy that religion was not excluded from the schools.

Although elementary education was not obligatory, it developed widely. In 1902 there were 2,364 elementary schools in the Flemish provinces, Brabant excluded. In 2,303 of them the work was given in Flemish and in only 61 in French. It was the custom, however, to teach the Flemish children French, about one hour a day being devoted to this language. This was true in 2,071 of the schools mentioned above.[68] It was this teaching of French which particularly aroused the ire of the Flamingants. Max Rooses of Antwerp stated their position on this question at the Netherlandish Language and Literary Congress in Ghent in 1891. He condemned the teaching of French in elementary schools as impracticable and unprofitable; he maintained that children should not be bothered with foreign languages but that they should devote all their time to perfecting their mother tongue and to the study of more important subjects. The Congress supported a motion to the effect that the "instruction of a second language in primary schools is harmful to the spiritual development of our people and dangerous for the pres-

[67] *Moniteur.* September 20, 1884.

[68] These figures were taken from the official triennial reports for the years 1900, 1901, and 1902.

ervation and efflorescence of our language." [69] It was a fact that the Walloon students did better than the Flemings in the state examinations. From 1885 to 1892 only 45.61% of the Flemish children who took such examinations received a grade higher than 60%, whereas 69.98% of the Walloons surpassed the mark. Inasmuch as the Flamingants considered that this difference was the result of the teaching of a second language, they demanded that public school children should no longer be burdened with French in the lower grades. Despite their efforts no reform was made and the teaching of French continued.

A more serious situation confronted the Flemings but one which they, as Flamingants, ignored. The law of 1884 had not made elementary education obligatory and as a result illiteracy was rife in Belgium, and especially so in Flanders.

Literates per 100 Inhabitants

	1890	*1900*	*1910*
Antwerp	63.07	68.39	74.50
Brabant	64.47	70.43	77.05
West Flanders	55.56	61.10	69.94
East Flanders	54.73	60.61	68.94
Hainault	60.10	66.92	73.09
Liége	68.74	74.10	80.38
Limburg	62.06	68.09	72.69
Luxemburg	77.04	80.32	83.75
Namur	74.55	78.50	83.13

Annuaire statistique de la Belgique et du Congo Belge. 45e année. 1914. Brussels: Lesigne. 1920. pp. 76, 77.

[69] Paul Fredericq, *op. cit.*, v. II, pp. 74-79.

It was evident that printed Flemish propaganda would never have its desired effect so long as 25% of the people at whom it was aimed could not read it. Hence the law of 1914 which made primary education obligatory was of great importance for the Flemish movement.[70] According to this law a child was to go to school until the age of fourteen. From the linguistic point of view it was stipulated that Belgian pupils should be taught in their mother tongue, this language being determined by a declaration by the parents. Provision was also made that a child who could not profit from his studies in the language which the parent had designated could be transferred by the head of the school to another section. This article was a victory for the Flamingants, for hitherto many Flemings had sent their children, whose mother tongue was Flemish, into French sections in order that their children might learn French. This practice could now be stopped provided the head of the school did his duty. The law did not prohibit the teaching of a second language in the elementary schools, for the Flamingants were unable to persuade parliament that Flemish children should learn only one language. French continued to be taught in Flanders and the Flamingants continued to protest against it.

The Flemish Academy and the University of Ghent

Flamingants not only felt the need of popular education in Flemish but also the need of stimulating the higher intellectual life in Flanders. To attain the latter

[70] Published in the *Moniteur.* May 22, 1914.

end two reforms were suggested: the creation of a Flemish academy, a closed corporation composed of supposedly the leading intellectuals of Flanders, and the establishment of a Flemish university.

The idea of a Flemish academy was an old one; Willems and David had dreamed of it as early as 1836 and the Commission of 1856 had listed it as a desideratum. Catholic Flemings had kept the idea alive after the publication of the Commission's report and in the spring of 1884 an attempt was made to create an "Academy of North and South" which was to include the intellectuals of Holland and Belgium. Such an institution was opposed by the Dutch Ministry and also by the Dutch press on the one hand and by the West Flemish particularists (the Gezelle school) on the other, and so the plan was abandoned.[71]

In the spring of 1886 it was rumored that the Government was considering the creation of a purely Flemish Academy and soon, in May, the question was discussed by the Chamber. In fact, it was proposed to establish the desired institution at Ghent. There were, however, those who opposed this plan, maintaining that a section of the Royal Academy should be reserved for Flemish men of letters.[72] Despite the opposition, the Government won the day and on July 6, 1886, a Flemish Academy was created at Ghent by royal decree. It was to be composed of twenty-five members, eighteen of them to be named by the Government and seven to be elected by these eighteen. In its

[71] See Paul Fredericq, *Geschiedenis der Vlaamsche beweging.* v. I, pp. 182, 183.

[72] This Academy was more than one hundred years old. See above, p. 37.

first years the Flemish Academy was the object of bitter criticism. The majority of the eighteen members named by the Government were Catholics and the seven new members, who had to be elected, were chosen, so it was claimed by the Liberals, for political and not for literary reasons. At all events important Liberal intellectuals were not elected to the Academy and for this reason the institution did not enjoy the best reputation in the first years of its existence.[73] In time it overcame this handicap and became a real force in Flanders.[74]

The second reform, the establishment of a Flemish university, was not realized with such rapidity. Although Flamingants maintained that there should be at least one state university in Belgium where a Fleming might receive a higher education in his mother tongue, nothing was done to satisfy their demand. As time went on Flamingants made clear their desire to transform the University of Ghent into a Flemish institution. Such a reform would provide Flanders with a state university giving instruction in Flemish and would leave Wallonia with the University of Liége, a state institution which would continue to employ French.[75] The transformation of Ghent into a Netherlandish university was not an easy task. The development of the

[73] P. Willems, "Geschiedenis der stichting eener Vlaamsche academie" in the *Verslagen en Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Vlaamsche Academie.* Ghent, 1887.

[74] A table of its works has been published: I. De Vreese and Jan Van Straelen, *Register van de bijdragen, lezingen, verslagen, enz. verschenen in de jaar-boeken en in de verslagen en mededeelingen der K. Vl. Academie. 1887-1926.* Ghent, 1927.

[75] It should be remembered that the Universities of Louvain and Brussels were private institutions.

institution had not been such as to facilitate this change. When the University had been created in 1817 on the initiative of King William I of the United Netherlands, instruction had been given in Latin, according to the custom of the time, with the exception of two courses in Netherlandish and two in French.[76] After the Belgian Revolution of 1830 the University had been reorganized and in 1835 all courses had been given in French after the example of French universities.[77]

The use of Flemish at the University of Ghent dated from 1854. In that year a Flemish student society, "It Shall Go Well," [78] succeeded in obtaining courses in Flemish literature and the Netherlandish language; two years later the Flemish Grievance Commission demanded that all the instruction in the University of Ghent should be given in Flemish; and in 1876 a law was passed which permitted candidates for a degree in philosophy and letters to choose whether they would be examined in the history of French or Flemish literature.[79] The last reform encouraged more students to pursue courses in Flemish literature, for hitherto this subject had been studied merely from inherent interest and with no thought of its being an aid in examinations. A few years later (1884) a Flemish Normal Section was created at the University in order to train the teachers required by the law of 1883 for the Flemish courses in secondary schools. In a few years thirty of a total of

[76] *Uit Vader Bergmann's gedenkschriften.* Ghent, 1895. pp. 96, 98, and 127.

[77] This régime was regulated by law in 1849. See *Moniteur* for July 19, 1849.

[78] *'t Zal Wel Gaan.*

[79] See the *Moniteur.* May 24, 1876.

seventy-five courses in the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters were given in Flemish and outstanding scholars were named as professors; among them were the historian Paul Fredericq and the philologist J. Vercoullie. A botany course in Flemish and a criminal law course in the same language were founded in 1888 and 1890, respectively. After 1890 doctoral dissertations in the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters were allowed to be written in Netherlandish, a privilege which the other universities granted later. Propaganda in favor of these reforms was continually carried on and step by step Flemish made its way into the scholastic halls of the University of Ghent.

The struggle for a Flemish university, however, did not become acute until the end of the nineteenth century. Then the need of higher education in the mother tongue was echoed and reëchoed in the Flemish press and in Flemish societies.[80] At the twenty-third Netherlandish Language and Literary Congress at Antwerp in 1896 the poet Pol De Mont brought up the question and succeeded in having a commission appointed to study and report on the problem. The findings of this body were drafted by Professor MacLeod of the University of Ghent and published in 1897. It was proposed that the courses in the Faculties of Philosophy and Letters, of Medicine, of Law, and of Science should

[80] At the seventy-fifth anniversary of the University of Ghent in 1892 one of the leading orators, Professor C. P. Tiele of Leyden, made a speech in Netherlandish, a thing which would have been a scandal twenty-five years earlier. He made a plea for the advance of Flemish culture and science and went so far as to say, "We feel that we, although divided from you by a political frontier, are joined to you in one nation both by language and by history." Paul Fredericq, *op. cit.*, v. II, p. 98.

be given in Flemish, but that the transformation should be gradual; that the professors already installed at Ghent should be invited, but not forced, to give their courses in Netherlandish; and that all new professors and instructors should be required to use Flemish, except for the teaching of Romance languages and literature. No provision was made for the use of Flemish in the technical schools at Ghent, an omission that boded trouble for the whole plan.[81] Needless to say, this report attracted the attention of all Flamingants; two editions of it, the second of over 15,000 copies, were sold out at once.[82]

Despite the fact that the men who drafted this plan were leading Flamingants, their report did not secure general approval. In the first place there were the Wallons and the Gallicized Flemings (the so-called "Fransquillons") who were categorically opposed to a Flemish university. The feeling of the former was characteristically expressed by Tournay-Detilleux, a Liberal, who scorned the idea of a university conducted in "Netherlandish, that foreign language." [83] The sentiment of the Fransquillons was exactly the same. Their opposition was expressed by the *Société Flamande pour la Vulgarisation de la Langue Française,*[84] an organization which met every Flemish offensive with a stalwart

[81] Professor J. MacLeod, *Verslag van de commissie.* Ghent: Van der Poorten. 1897.

[82] Professor MacLeod published another statement of his views in 1903: *Over de vervlaamsching der Gentsche Hoogeschool.* Ghent.

[83] This statement was made in answer to a questionnaire sent out by "It Shall Go Well." It was published in the *Gent Studentenalmanak voor 1897.*

[84] Founded 1898.

defense. Also the Faculty of Ghent opposed a Flemish University at Ghent. On May 13, 1899, it voted against such a reform by 34 to 6, with 4 abstentions. The higher clergy under the leadership of Cardinal Mercier opposed it, too. In the *Instructions Collectives,* published in September, 1906, it was stated that the language in higher education should be an international language and that for Flanders it should be French.

In the second place there were those who believed in a bi-lingual university—a university with half of the courses in French and half of them in Flemish. To this group belonged the most prominent Flemish professors of the University of Ghent, J. Vercoullie and Paul Fredericq. Several Walloon professors, among whom were Professors Kurth and Stecher of Liége, favored this solution.[85] J. De Vigne, an important Flemish parliamentarian, cast his lot with the men of this opinion, [86] as did Jan Van Rijswijck, Burgomaster of Antwerp,[87] and several others.

In the third place there were the opportunists and those who favored a Flemish university but who were not clear as to the exact extent to which French should be excluded. Among these were Burgomaster Buls of Brussels; Edmond Picard, one of Belgium's foremost lawyers; Julius Sabbe, a journalist of Bruges; Max Rooses, curator of the Plantijn Museum of Antwerp; Coremans, the Catholic tribune; and Anseele, leader of the Socialists of Ghent.[88] The opportunists counted among their number Professor MacLeod and

[85] *Gent Studentenalmanak* for 1897 and 1898. *loc. cit.*
[86] See *Het Volksbelang* for December 2, 1899.
[87] See *De Vlaamsche Gazet* for December 11, 1900.
[88] *Studentenalmanak* for 1897 and 1898.

those who supported his report. Father Daens was also of their opinion; he presented a bill to the Chamber in May, 1905, authorizing the desired change but allowing the professors already appointed to continue teaching in French. No vote was ever taken on this bill.

In the fourth place, there were the "radicals" who wanted the University of Ghent with all its faculties and all its technical schools to be exclusively Flemish and who demanded that such a reform be made at once. The chief of this group was a young engineer and economist, Lodewijk De Raet. He advanced his arguments in November before the *Vlaamsche Volksraad,*[89] supporting them with an elaborate documentation. He pointed out that it was just as necessary to have the instruction in the technical schools at Ghent in Flemish as to use Flemish in the Faculties of Letters, Law, Medicine, and Science; that it would be twenty or thirty years before a Flemish university would be obtained if Professor MacLeod's plan were adopted; that if the entire University of Ghent with the exception of the technical schools became Flemish, many difficulties would arise because the same professors often taught in the technical schools and in other faculties; and that proportionately many more students were enrolled in the technical schools than in any other branch of the University. Despite these arguments the *Volksraad* decided to support the MacLeod plan rather than that of De Raet. De Raet was not silenced, however. He decided to give publicity to his ideas and in 1906 published them in *Over Vlaamsche volkskracht.*

[89] See above, p. 120.

De Vervlaamsching der Hoogeschool van Gent.[90] The main theme running through this book was that the lower classes can never better their condition so long as they are prevented from acquiring scientific knowledge. In Flanders this knowledge had been kept from the common people, he argued, because they did not know the language of the educated bourgeoisie. He insisted that technical education be given in Flemish so that the economic power of Flanders might fall into the hands of Flamingants, especially the coal mines which had just been discovered in the Kempen.[91]

These arguments made a favorable impression upon the Flemings and brought their author into prominence. In fact, De Raet was made a member of a new university commission appointed in 1907 by the Pan-

[90] Brussels: De Vlaamsche Boekhandel.

[91] The best statement of L. De Raet's point of view was written by him in later years and published in "La Question des langues en Belgique au point de vue social," *Bulletin de l'Institut Solvay*. No. 24. pp. 214, 215.

"To resume, the difference which one notices between the Flemings and the Walloons results from disparate effects which the industrial revolution has had in the two parts of this country. The industry of the Flemish provinces is characterized by low wages and long hours of work. Small scale farming still constitutes the essential activity of the population. The intellectual level of the Flemings is low and the number of illiterates is high. Reading is not common. Finally the social level is of an inferior sort and is characterized by drunkenness and crime. The reforms which can remedy this situation and which are the most urgent are general education and elementary instruction; the increase of the technical capacity of the industrial worker, by professional and industrial schools; and the development of scientific knowledge of agriculture in order to increase the productivity of the soil.

"But to realize these reforms it does not suffice, as in the Walloon provinces, to find the necessary moral forces and financial means, but also to overcome the linguistic obstacle which is peculiar to the Flemish regions of the country. The classes which direct and whose members are educated do not speak the same language as the people. All higher education is given in French and cannot therefore reach efficaciously either the bourgeoisie or the workers of the small towns, or the farmers.

"Therefore, the problem which should be solved first is to find out how this obstacle can be overcome and by what means this result can be obtained at once. Is it best to substitute the language of the *élites*, French, for that of the masses, Flemish? Or would it be better if the enlightened classes would work for the amelioration of the popular classes by using the language of the common people?

"This is, in truth, the linguistic question in Belgium."

Netherlandish League and was selected to draft the report of that body. In the document which he drew up, he opposed Professor MacLeod's plan as being too evolutionary and slow; he refused to consider seriously the proposal to establish a new Flemish university at Antwerp, for such an institution would have no scholastic standing and would not attract students; and he scoffed at the suggestion of making the University of Ghent bi-lingual, because such a makeshift scheme was unsatisfactory to the Flemings.[92] The report maintained that all instruction in the University of Ghent should be given in Flemish, eleven years being provided for the transformation; that foreign languages should be taught by the direct method and that they might be employed in courses dealing with their respective literatures; that professors already appointed should be invited to give their courses in Netherlandish, but if they were unable to comply with this request, that new courses should be created; that all new instructors should be required to use Flemish; and that a school of mines and a school of agriculture should be founded at Ghent with all instruction in them in Netherlandish.

This report received the approval of most of the Flamingants. They were at last united in their aims. The problem of enacting the proposals into law next presented itself. All Flemish forces united in a campaign of propaganda to awaken interest in the cause. The report of the commission was distributed and the number of those who signed it rose from 2,000 during the first few months to over 100,000 at the outbreak

[92] Vlaamsche Hoogeschool Commissie. *Verslag over de vervlaamsching der Hoogeschool van Gent.* Ghent: Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond. 1909. pp. 152-160.

of the World War. The Flemish University Commission founded a review, *De Vlaamsche Hoogeschool,* as part of its propaganda. University students, who had begun in 1899 the custom of holding general student congresses composed of representatives from the four Belgian institutions of higher learning, approved the report. Other Flemish organizations and the Flemish press lent their support to the movement. Meetings were held regularly at which orators stirred up the interest of the people. In each of the political parties there was a champion of the cause. Among the Catholics there was Frans Van Cauwelaert, a brilliant young man who had started a professorial career at Freiburg, Switzerland, but who had been called back to Antwerp to take the place of Coremans as the leader of the Flemish wing of the Catholic Party; among the Liberals there was Louis Franck, a lawyer of Antwerp; among the Socialists there was Kamiel Huysmans, a clever young man who had taught school for a time, who had then won his political spurs as a parliamentary reporter, and who was prominent in the international labor movement. On December 18, 1910, these three men were the principal speakers at a large meeting in Antwerp, an event which marked the beginning of the political struggle for a Flemish university on the basis of De Raet's report. On March 24, 1911, these same men, joined by Anseele (Socialist), Persoons (Liberal), and Delbeke (Catholic), presented to the Chamber a bill incorporating the ideas which had been proposed by the second Flemish university commission.

Needless to say there was considerable opposition to the action of the Flamingants. At Ghent an organization, *L'Union pour la Défense de la Langue Française*

à l'Université de Gand, was founded (October 10, 1910) in order to prevent the transformation, which was considered "a crime of *lèse-civilisation,* a crime of *lèse-patrie,* and a crime of *lèse-cité.*" A student society was also founded for the same purpose, *La Ligue des Etudiants contre la Flamandisation de l'Université de Gand.* In addition to these forces there were the *Vulgarisateurs,*[93] the French press led by *La Flandre Libérale* of Ghent, and many private individuals.

There was opposition to the Van Cauwelaert-Franck-Huysmans bill in the Chamber. A complete Flemish university was a nightmare to many of the deputies. In order to take the wind out of the sails of its supporters, its opponents proposed an alternative solution providing for a French and a Flemish section at Ghent and allowing students to decide in which section they would enroll. A bill, embodying this alternative, was presented to the Chamber on May 3, 1911, by Arthur Verhaegen of Ghent. Affairs drifted along until May, 1913, when it was reported that the Government was planning to support the bi-lingual university proposal. The radical Flemings at once bestirred themselves and on May 25, 1913, held an indignation meeting in which it was declared, "We prefer no Flemish university rather than have the caricature which will be created by doubling all the courses at Ghent. . . ." The Liberal Julius Hoste, Jr., stated that if a bi-lingual arrangement were voted, the Flemings would boycott the University. These radicals demanded *alles of niets* (everything or nothing) and they demanded it stead-

[93] That is the members of the *Société Flamande pour la Vulgarisation de la Langue Française* (founded May, 1898).

fastly.[94] Again there was a period of calm while the parliamentary commissions considered the bills and made reports. They had not finished their work when the World War came as a revolutionizer of all Belgian affairs; the struggle for a Flemish University had to be postponed indefinitely.

Reforms Concerning the Use of Flemish in the Army

The Flemings' desire for linguistic reform extended to every branch of Belgian public life in which French predominated. Hence it extended to the army, for, as we have seen, French alone was adopted for use in the army following the Belgian Revolution of 1830. Flamingants resented the fact that Flemings who desired to follow a military career had to begin their training by learning French. They complained that such a condition automatically eliminated from the service many Flemings who otherwise might have filled subordinate positions and that it worked a hardship on both Flemish officers and privates. The injustice of the situation had been recognized by the Grievance Commission of 1856, but nothing was done to improve matters until 1884. In that year a bill which stipulated that all army officers should know Flemish was presented to the Chamber. For three years an investigating committee delayed the measure. At last in 1887 the bill was placed before the Chamber and discussion of it was begun. On the very first day of the debate the former Meetingist, Coremans, so aroused the Walloon Liberals with his violent language that several of them filed from the Chamber in indignation. This was

[94] *De Vlaamsche Hoogeschool.* Third year. No. 5. p. 2.

indeed an inauspicious beginning; henceforth the Walloons opposed the measure with all possible parliamentary filibustering.[95] The original bill as presented by the committee was revised once by the Chamber and twice by the Senate before it actually became law, the mangled document providing simply that Flemish be taught in the Military School for officers and in regimental schools and that after January 1, 1892, the same number of points be counted for Flemish as for French in the examinations required of second-lieutenants.[96] Once again Flamingants had had a bill trimmed by amendments until little of it remained, and this time so little, in fact, that many Flemings considered the passage of the bill a defeat rather than a victory.[97]

The law of 1888 effected little improvement in the linguistic situation in the army and Flemings sought other reforms. In want of any better solution leading Flamingants decided to demand the creation of Wal-

[95] Flemish Liberal organizations sent several pleas to the Liberals in the Chamber imploring them to support the bill, but to no avail. A characteristic one was published in *Het Volksbelang,* December 10 and 17, 1887. Bara replied to them that the Liberal Party was not made up of associations. *Annales parlementaires.* April 25, 1888.

[96] *Moniteur.* May 10, 1888.

[97] The linguistic situation was also acute in the militia *(Garde Civique).* A number of intellectuals belonged to this service and resented being commanded in French. For this reason there were a number of cases of men having answered "present" in Flemish or having counted off with Flemish numerals. The offenders had then been tried in French, again causing a linguistic row. In this manner pressure was brought to bear and in 1897 a law was passed providing that trials in the militia might be conducted in Flemish and that in the Flemish provinces the administration, command, and instruction of the militia should be in Flemish. *Moniteur.* September 9, 1897.

loon and Flemish regiments in accordance with a suggestion advanced by the Grievance Commission. This proposition secured little parliamentary support, however, and the law which was finally passed as a temporary expedient simply required students at the Military School to know both Flemish and French.[98] This did not change matters a great deal. It was impossible to teach Flemish to the many officers already in the service and the fact that most of them knew only French was to have grave consequences in the World War. It was doubly important because Belgium adopted obligatory military service in 1913 and thus many young Flemings from the lower classes who did not know French were commanded in a foreign language.[99]

The Flemish Movement and Economics

During the course of this study several references have been made to the social and economic situation in Flanders. In general it has been remarked that Flamingants came from the lower classes while Fransquillons (the Gallicized Flemings) composed the upper classes. The fact that the economic power in Belgium was in the hands of enemies of the Flemish movement was a serious political and social handicap to the Flamingants.

Another phase of the economic situation is also worthy of consideration. The economic development of Belgium was such that the two linguistic districts, Flanders and Wallonia, were bound together by numer-

[98] *Moniteur.* July 1, 1913.
[99] *Moniteur.* August 31, 1913.

ous economic ties. Railway lines and canals knit them together; large firms had holdings in both districts; banks had investments in both regions; and the Belgian customs barrier tended to concentrate the trade of the country within itself. Flamingants looked upon this economic interdependence with misgivings and some of them, among whom the economist L. De Raet stands out preëminently, warned against it.[100]

Just before the outbreak of the World War an economic development began in Flanders which some Flamingants imagined would make it possible to break many of the economic ties with Wallonia. In 1901 an excellent quality of coal for coke was discovered in the Kempen district of Flanders. Although the coal was located very deep and hence was hard to obtain, it was considered of the greatest economic value. It was estimated that at the present rate of consumption it would be enough to meet Belgium's demands for 250 years.[101]

No sooner had the coal been discovered than those interested in coke rushed to the fields in search of mines. The state, to which all subsoil products belong in Belgium, had the right to sell concessions at will. All rights except one were bought up by Walloon or by French firms.[102] There was only one firm which could

[100] Aside from the books already mentioned by De Raet may be added *Vlaanderen's economische ontwikkeling* which was written just prior to the War. Published by Standaard Boekhandel, Brussels.

[101] A. Pira, "De Limburgsche Koolmijnen," *V. E. V. Berichten.* October, 1927. p. 3.

[102] *Les Liégeois en Campine* was a Cockerill interest; *Usine de la Providence* belonged to other Walloons; *Winterslag* was exploited by Creusot of France; etc.

be termed Flemish in any sense of the word—*De Kempische Vennootschap tot Bevordering van de Mijnnijverheid.* The profits to be derived from the exploitation of these mines were then from the very first destined to leave Flanders. Moreover, there were not enough Flemish engineers to man the positions which were created and Walloons were called in to fill the best places while Flemings were used as common laborers. Thus, instead of forming the basis for the economic independence of Flanders, it would seem that the mines served as a bond to draw Wallonia and Flanders even closer together.[103]

Other Flemings saw in the Congo a factor which might help to free Flanders from her economic dependency on French speaking territory. Such dreams, however, were short lived. Although provision was made in the law concerning the government of the Congo, when that territory was made a Belgian Colony in 1908, that all laws and ordinances pertaining to the general welfare of the land should be published in Flemish as well as in French,[104] French was adopted for administrative purposes; was the language used in the native schools; was used by practically all business establishments; and was the language of those who fur-

[103] Prior to the War a book was published which endeavored to establish that Flemings were at a disadvantage in government services. The anonymous author, Didaskalos, declared among other things that in the Ministry of Railways, Post Offices, Telegraphs, and Telephones Walloons earned 1,948,600 francs a year while Flemings received only 853,000 francs. These statistics were not introduced into the text because the author had no way of checking the information. See *34 Open brieven aan M. Helleputte, Minister van Spoorwegen, Posterijen, Telegrafen, en Telefonen.* Antwerp: Standaard. 1909.

[104] *Moniteur.* October 11-20, 1908. Article 3.

nished the capital for the exploitation of the colony. Thus the Congo, although it contributed to the development of the Flemish port of Antwerp and its raw products to the establishment of a certain number of industries in Flanders, did not advance the cause of Flemish economic self-sufficiency. In fact, the extension of the use of French followed so consistently every Belgian economic development that Flamingants began to consider the former the inevitable consequence of the latter. In the years before the War, nearly every economic enterprise seems to have worked to the disadvantage of the Flemish movement.

Standing on the threshold of the World War and looking back over the history of the Flemish movement, one could trace with the mind's eye a slow evolution of nationalist ideas, a gradual acceptance of those ideas by an ever increasing number of persons, and finally the attainment of numerous linguistic reforms. The "Netherlandish revival" led by Willems, David, and Conscience, the statement of the Flemish program by the Grievance Commission, the realization of a considerable part of this program by the reforms from 1870 to 1914, the formation of extreme views by the *Van Nu en Straks* school, and the increased tempo of Flamingant propaganda stood out as the high points of the Flemish movement during the nineteenth century. If one could have divined the future as well as one could understand the past, one would have seen momentous days ahead for the Flemish cause. The World War was to mark a new step in its history.

CHAPTER VI

The Flemish Movement During the World War

Pre-War Ideas of the Administrative Division of Belgium

Up to the time of the World War, the leaders of the Flemish movement had demanded comparatively mild reforms. It is certainly true that the outstanding political Flamingants of 1914, Van de Perre and Van Cauwelaert (Catholics), Louis Franck (Liberal), and Anseele and Huysmans (Socialists), had no thought of destroying the political unity of Belgium. They were content to limit their demands to a strict equality of Flemish and French in public educational institutions, in the army, in the courts, and in all other governmental services. As is evidenced by this program, the Flemish movement of *ante bellum* days was first of all a struggle for cultural and linguistic equality in Belgium.

During the World War, however, a more radical element appeared in the Flemish movement. New leaders arose with new ideas and new ideals. Not content with mere cultural and linguistic reforms, these extremists proposed various changes of great political import, such as the administrative division of Belgium along linguistic lines, the creation of a Flemish-Walloon dual monarchy, the political independence of Flanders, or the union of Flanders with Holland.[1] How

[1] These changes have been common to many national movements. See C. J. H. Hayes, *Essays on Nationalism*. New York: Macmillan. 1926. p. 55.

this development occurred in the short period of four years of war, we shall here endeavor to show.

Prior to 1914, as has been said, no considerable group of Flemings had demanded the administrative division of Belgium and certainly no group had ever talked seriously about political independence or union with Holland. Nevertheless, such ideas had occasionally been expressed by individuals here and there and on the eve of the War such expressions were undoubtedly becoming more frequent. Henri Conscience, in the preface to the first edition of his *Lion of Flanders* (1839), had suggested that trouble might develop between the two nationalities in Belgium. This rather mild opinion had been shared by another romanticist, Blommaert, whose article on the subject in the review, *Kunst en Letterblad* for 1840, had gone into some detail concerning the matter. A few years later another Flemish intellectual, J. C. van Theelem, had taken a more advanced stand, and had made this pointed statement: "Nothing can save Belgium from ruin but the administrative separation of the Teutonic (Flemish) and the Gallic (Walloon) parts of Belgium." [2] The Grievance Commission of 1856 also had discussed the question, but following the publication of its report, had done nothing to effect the autonomy of Flanders. Then plans for changing the political framework of Belgium seemed to have remained dormant until the end of the nineteenth century when August Vermeylen and the *Van Nu en Straks* group had revived them.

[2] This statement prefaced van Theelem's translation of an article by G. Hoefken entitled *Belgien in seinen Verhältnissen zu Frankreich und Deutschland* (Stuttgart, 1845).

In the twentieth century the Flemish People's Council,[3] the inner group of the National Flemish Association, had become interested in the possibility of dividing Belgium along linguistic lines for purposes of administration and in March, 1914, appointed a commission to study the matter. Further evidence of the interest that this idea had been awakening was the fact that at Louvain a student paper, *Als't Past,* had taken a decided stand for Flemish "home rule";[4] that a journal, *De Bestuurlijke Scheiding* (Administrative Division),[5] had been founded at Ghent devoted exclusively to the subject; and that a letter written by a Fleming in answer to Destrée's appeal to the King had suggested that administrative division might be the best cure for Belgium's ills.[6] If this were not sufficient proof that certain Flamingants were seriously considering the advisability of autonomy for Flanders, one might cite the writings of those who had opposed the plan, by far more numerous than those who had favored it, an excellent indication that the idea was abroad in Flanders.[7]

Flemings were by no means the only ones in Belgium who were nourishing such thoughts. Some Walloons, as we have seen, had come to believe in the desirability of breaking the unitary Belgian state into the two constituent regions of Wallonia and Flanders. The Minister of State, Dupont, a Walloon, had ex-

[3] That is, the *Vlaamsche Volksraad.* See above, pp. 120, 164.

[4] L. Dosfel, *Katholiek activistisch verweerschrift.* Ghent: St. Michelsdrukkerij. 1918. pp. 35, 36.

[5] Edited by Alfons Sevens.

[6] This letter was written by H. Meert.

[7] See the treatment of this phase of the question in an anonymous book, *Activisten.* Ghent: Hoste. 1919. pp. 12, 13.

claimed in the Senate on March 9, 1910, "Rather than learn Dutch we shall advocate administrative division" and, "Long live the administrative division." [8] A Walloon publicist by the name of Jennissen had edited in 1911 a publication entitled, *Wallons et Flamands. Pour la Séparation.* The provincial councils of Hainault and Liége had adopted in 1912 resolutions in favor of an increased local autonomy, which should lead gradually to the administrative independence of the Walloon provinces. Albert Mockel, an ardent Walloon, had written in the review, *Wallonia,* for October, 1911, "The only means by which Wallonia and Flanders can live in fraternal peace and develop freely is by the complete administrative separation of the two peoples." And similar opinions had been expressed by Jules Destrée and the Walloon Assembly.[9] So on the eve of the World War a few intellectuals, both Walloons and Flemings, were playing with the idea of administrative home rule, a fact which was to complicate greatly German domination in Belgium and to write a new page in the history of the Flemish movement.

The manner in which Flemings as well as Walloons responded to the call to arms following the refusal of the Belgian government to allow the free passage of German troops through Belgium shows how little actual disloyalty to the state of Belgium there was in Flan-

[8] See *Annales parlementaires.*

[9] See F. Foulon, *La Question Wallonne.* Brussels: Leerspoel. 1918. pp. 173 *et seq.* Jules Destrée, *Wallons et Flammands.* pp. 108 *et seq.* E. Jennissen, *Pour la séparation politique et administrative.* Liége: Desser. 1911. J. Delaite, *Etude d' un régime séparatiste en Belgique.* Liége: Thône. 1912. François André, *La Séparation administrative.* Frameries: Dufrane-Friart. 1912.

ders at the beginning of the War. The stubborn defense of Belgian soldiers before the onslaught of the overwhelming German military machine has been written into history as one of the most gallant features of the World War. Despite this resistance, by the end of October, 1914, the Germans were in possession of almost all of Belgium, only one small corner remaining unoccupied. The Belgian national government had fled before the invaders and had repaired to Havre, France, where it endeavored to knit together the raveled threads of its affairs. It was under such trying conditions that Belgium was forced to weather the four years' storm of war—from the autumn of 1914 to the autumn of 1918.[10]

German Administration of Belgium During the First Months of Occupation

The Germans, confronted with the task of administering the occupied territory, installed Baron von der Goltz as military governor-general at Brussels on September 2, 1914.[11] The governor-general was both military commander in the country and head of the civil government and administration. In his latter capacity he was aided by the re-organized native ministries and their staffs, which were composed largely of the same persons who had held office prior to the

[10] *Der Weltkrieg 1914 bis 1918: die Militärischen Operationen zu Lande.* vol. I. *Die Grenzchlachten in Westen.* Berlin: Mittler. 1925.

[11] *Gesezt und Verordnungsblatt für die Okkupierten Gebiete Belgiens.* No. 1. September 5, 1914. Published in German, Flemish, and French.

occupation.[12] Such a simple organization would probably have sufficed if the German military plans had carried, that is, if the war had been of short duration. But as month after month passed by and it became more and more apparent that the conflict would be a long one, the necessity was felt for the creation of a more highly organized system. An untold number of problems had arisen which swamped the governor-general and his staff and which required the assistance of technical advisers. At the beginning of 1915 the Germans began to expand their organization. On January 1 a Central Press Office,[13] with an organ of its own, the *Belgische Kurier,* was established in order to control the news published in Belgian newspapers. Also in January, von Bissing, who had succeeded von der Goltz as governor-general of Belgium, set up a commission to treat the question of nationalities, ex-

[12] Subordinate functionaries had not left for Havre but had remained at their tasks in Brussels and were hence available for service under the Germans. Most of them served the invaders loyally.

The governor-general was assisted by local administrative organizations; a German military governor and a president of civil administration were placed in charge of each province; a military and a civil officer, in charge of each arrondissement; and a "commander," in charge of each township. The governor-general's authority did not extend to certain so-called *zones d'étappes* along the combattant front in the extreme southwestern part of Belgium. These zones were subject directly to military authority. Concerning German administration in Belgium see H. Pirenne, *La Belgique et la guerre mondiale.* New Haven: Yale Press. 1928. J. Pirenne and M. Vauthier, *La Législation et l'administration allemande en Belgique.* New Haven: Yale Press. 1926. Ludwig von Köhler, *Die Staatsverwaltung der Besetzten Gebiete Belgien.* New Haven: Yale Press. 1927. Adolf Solanský, *German Administration in Belgium.* New York: Columbia Studies. 1928.

[13] *Pressenzentrale.*

cellent evidence that the Germans had already realized the importance of the Flemish question. In February [14] the governor-general created a Political Bureau [15] which included, in addition to the Central Press Office, an economic section, a diplomatic section, and a section for internal politics. The duty of each section was to furnish technical advice concerning those matters assigned to it. Thus it was that the section for internal politics had to do with the Flemish question and immediately began to study what Germany's attitude towards it should be.[16]

German Designs on Belgium

It may be well before carrying our story further to pause a moment in order to consider what Germany's designs on Belgium actually were. So many stories have been current concerning this matter that it is difficult to distinguish between falsehood and fact. Moreover, it is not easy to determine what constitutes a nation's policy as regards a certain issue. Should it be determined by what a nation actually does, or by the views of a few responsible statesmen, or by the claims of a part of the population, or by the desires of a majority of the people? If one limits one's analysis to any of these four categories, one will surely obtain an erroneous opinion. However, it may be

[14] February 13, 1915.

[15] *Politische Abteilung.*

[16] In the report of the Political Bureau for the first quarter after its creation the chief of the Bureau, Freiherr von der Lancken, stated that a study of the Flemish question was being made.

profitable to consider them all in an effort to establish some general notions.

In the first place, what designs did the German people have on Belgium and what attitude did they take toward the Flemish movement? It is probably correct to answer this question by stating that any fixed "designs" or "an attitude" did not exist. At least this is the opinion of such an ardent defender of Belgium as Henri Pirenne.[17] The vast majority of Germans had little interest in seeing Belgium annexed to the Empire and most of them were totally ignorant of the Flemish movement.[18] When, during the War, Belgium had actually been occupied, it required a vast amount of propaganda to create an interest among Germans in the fate of Belgium and in the Flemish movement. In order to awaken the German people to a cognizance of the opportunities afforded them, those in power arranged for the publication of a number of pamphlets on the subject;[19] they founded a review, *Der Belfried,* devoted exclusively to Belgium; they encouraged lectures concerning the Flemish movement; and they fostered the founding of Flemish-German societies.

[17] Henri Pirenne, *La Belgique et la guerre mondiale.* pp. 209, 210.

[18] Pirenne also holds this view. See, too, Theodore Heyse, *La Propagande allemande en Belgique avant la guerre.* Brussels: La Renaissance d'Occident. 1925. p. 22.

[19] A long list of such pamphlets is contained in Fernand Passelecq, *La Question flamande et l'Allemagne.* Paris: Berger-Levrault. 1917. pp. 318-329. As examples one might mention: Dr. Franz Anhalt, *Die deutsche Verwaltung in Belgien.* Berlin: Stilke. 1917; Otto Kessler, *Das deutsche Belgien. Beiträge zur Geschichte, Volkswirtschaft, und deutschen Verwaltung.* Berlin: Siegesmund. 1915; and Karl G. Lamprecht, *Deutsche Zukunft in Belgien. Aus den nachgelassenen Schriften.* Gotha: Rerthes. 1916.

Such important intellectuals as Karl Lamprecht of the University of Leipzig lent their aid to the propaganda while Governor-General von Bissing and Admiral von Tirpitz accepted honorary offices in the *Deutsch-Flämische Gesellschaft* of Berlin and Düsseldorf.[20] But despite all the efforts that were made to interest the Germans in Belgium, there was never a popular movement among them to annex that country or to free Flanders, as there was among the French to retrieve Alsace-Lorraine.

There were, of course, individuals in Germany who thought that Belgium should form part of a *Gross-Deutschland* and who viewed the Flemings as maltreated Teutonic brothers. Such was the opinion of the members of the Pan-German League. But even they considered Holland more legitimately "German" than they did Belgium, and they seemed much more anxious to incorporate the Dutch Netherlands in the German nation than to annex the Belgian Low Countries. Moreover, it should be added that the importance of the Pan-German League has been greatly exaggerated; its influence was actually limited to a comparatively small circle.[21] One might mention in contrast to the attitude of the Pan-German Leaguers that of the Germans who had settled in Belgium before the War. It is a curious fact that these people had almost entirely ignored the Flemish movement; they had spoken French in both their business and social

[20] This society was founded in 1917. It published a review, *Vlamenland*. Since the War the society has been inactive and practically non-existent.

[21] Mildred Wertheimer, *The Pan-German League, 1890-1914*. New York: Columbia Studies. 1924.

life; they had attended French theaters; and they had given only a very minor place to the Flemish language in the German schools of Brussels and Antwerp.

One finds less divergence in the attitude of persons in extremely responsible positions. Von Bissing, governor-general of Belgium from the winter of 1914 to April, 1917, seems to have leaned toward the views of the Pan-German League. His ideas are succinctly set forth in a document known as the *Political Testament of General von Bissing, Formerly Governor-General of Belgium.*[22] He began his testament by disclosing economic and strategic reasons why Germany should retain Belgium as a dependency. He maintained that the annexation of Belgium would be a guarantee of peace, and that it would give Germany a better opportunity to defend her existing colonies and would enable her to obtain the Belgian Congo. "Germany is also interested in the Flemish movement, which has made considerable progress but which will be mortally struck if we do not extend to Belgium our policy of force. The Belgian question is not settled and I absolutely do not nourish the thoughtless hope of seeing the Flemings make our domination in Belgium easy. . . . Without doubt one must protect the Flemings, but one must not allow them to become entirely independent." This testament was preceded by a letter to Gustav Stresemann, then member of the Reichstag, in which von Bissing expressed similar views. It was dated January 14, 1917, and shows von Bissing's con-

[22] It first appeared in *Das Grössere Deutschland. Wochenschrift für die Deutsche Welt und Kolonialpolitik.* No. 20. May 19, 1917. pp. 609-624. See also F. Passelecq, *Le Testament politique du Général von Bissing.* Paris: Van Oest et Cie. 1917.

viction that Belgium should be annexed. "Otherwise the war will have been lost." "My entire policy, which I have practiced and endeavored to realize in Belgium for the last two years, is colored by this idea of the future. . . . It is in this spirit also that the Flemish policy has been conducted by me. . . ."

Von Bissing's views are especially interesting, for, as governor-general, he enjoyed a considerable amount of autonomy. His successor, von Falkenhausen, however, appears to have been controlled more directly by the German chancellor and the general staff, and the policies pursued during his *régime* seem to reflect the power of those behind him and to indicate mere military expediency.[23]

The attitude of Germany's War chancellors is also important, for they played important rôles in determining the measures to be taken in Belgium. Bethmann-Hollweg wrote concerning Belgium and the Flemish movement:

"The German interests which we are furthering by this policy are clear. The fate of Belgium depends upon the final success of our armies. But whatever happens a Belgium whose internal organization is separate [*sic*] and in which a Flemish majority is free from the domination of the Walloon minority, will be more easily made useful to German interests than the Belgian state under its present form. . . ." [24]

Bethman-Hollweg's successor, Michaelis, also expressed an interest in the Flemish movement and it

[23] Henri Pirenne, *La Belgique et la guerre mondiale.* p. 246.

[24] Letter from Bethmann-Hollweg to von Hindenburg, March 7, 1917. Published in the *Archives du Conseil de Flandre.* Brussels: Dewarichet. 1929. p. 478.

was he who, working through Governor-General von Falkenhausen, took some of the most far reaching steps in dividing Belgium.[25] Count von Hertling, chancellor after Michaelis, followed the course set by his predecessors, although the uncertain success of German arms during the latter part of his term of office made a vacillating policy almost inevitable. And then there was the attitude of the general staff, by no means a negligible factor in forming German policies during the War. Without going into details suffice it to say that the Emperor, von Hindenburg, and Ludendorf recognized the military value of Belgium and gave their approbation to the support of Flemish agitation and the exploitation of the country.[26] On the other hand it must be remembered that in the negotiations for peace during the course of the War, the Germans never demanded the annexation of Belgium as a *sine qua non* for the cessation of hostilities. It would seem that their interest in Belgium and the Flemish movement was a creature of the War and that their designs on her were largely, although not entirely, of a military nature.

For its part the German government had taken no stand regarding the Flemish movement or Belgium prior to the War, unless it were a stand of political aloofness. But during the conflict when the ordinary methods of determining policies were more or less cast to the winds, when many things were done for military reasons which otherwise would not have been done, when power was concentrated in the hands of a

[25] See below, pp. 203-204.

[26] *Archives du Conseil de Flandre.* pp. 478, 479, *et seq.*

few persons, and these for the most part military leaders, and when the government was faced with the actual proposition of having Belgium within its power, then the government's attitude changed. What that attitude was and what was actually done will be related during the course of this chapter.

The Beginnings of Activism

With the German invasion of Belgium the leaders of the Flemish movement were placed in a difficult position. Should they continue their agitation for measures favorable to their cause and accept the desired reforms from the hands of the invaders, or should they cease their particular agitation, lend all their strength to the expulsion of the foe, and repudiate whatever action the Germans might be willing to take to carry out the Flemish program? Both horns of this dilemma appeared to have their disadvantages and it is little wonder that Flamingants differed on which horn to grasp. But as some stand was necessary certain Flemish leaders decided to coöperate actively with the Germans in the realization of Flemish reforms and hence became known as "Activists"; others refused to accept aid from the invaders and decided on a kind of passive resistance and hence became known as "Passivists"; while still others, who endeavored to pursue a course between the two extremes, received the condemnations, if not the insults, of both Activists and Passivists.

Very soon after the German occupation of Belgium, Flamingants began to group themselves into the above mentioned categories and the Activists commenced to

form societies in order to further their aims. In October, 1914, a group of Activists organized a society, Young Flanders,[27] at Ghent. This association was led by Domela Nieuwenhuis Nijegaard, a Dutch citizen and pastor of a Protestant Church at Ghent, who had already given ample proof of his sympathy with the more radical elements in the Flemish movement. The ranks of Young Flanders were filled largely with young intellectuals among whom may be mentioned Reimond Kimpe and Leo Picard, who became professors at the University of Ghent during the occupation. Young Flanders proclaimed its willingness to carry on the Flemish cause and to coöperate with the Germans. Its specific demands, as published in its organ, *De Vlaamsche Post,*[28] were three in number: the use of Flemish in the educational institutions of Flanders, the separation of Flanders from Wallonia, and the political support of Flanders by Germany.[29]

Soon numerous other Activist societies similar to Young Flanders came into being, by far too many to be mentioned here individually. It will be well, however, to notice briefly the more important ones. There was the Nationalist Union,[30] a sort of nationalist Flemish party of some 4,200 members, whose platform had as its first plank "the complete independence of Flanders." Then there were associations whose programs indicated the former political affiliations of their

[27] *Jong Vlaanderen.*

[28] Founded in February, 1915.

[29] Rudiger, pseudonym for A. Wullus, *Flamenpolitik.* Brussels: Rossel. pp. 8, *et seq.* See also *Activisten.* Ghent: Hoste. 1919. pp. 18, *et seq.*

[30] *Nationalistische Bond.*

members, as, for instance, Free Flanders,[31] quite as radical as Young Flanders concerning Flemish reforms but with a decided Catholic bent; the Flemish Advance Guards,[32] who preached Flemish independence and mild socialist reform; and the Flemish Workers' Association,[33] whose 3,000 members demanded labor legislation and a free Flanders. Of a less radical nature was the Groeninger Guard,[34] 678 strong, which believed that Flanders' ills might be cured by linguistic and cultural reforms and that German aid should be solicited in order to obtain the necessary changes.[35]

Finally there were a number of independent Activists, men who remained outside formal organizations but whose influence in the Activist movement was considerable. For the most part they envisaged a federal union of Flanders and Wallonia, a sort of dual monarchy. Prominent among these men were the lawyer, L. Dosfel, the physician and future rector of the "Flemish" University of Ghent, Dr. R. Speleers, and Professor J. De Decker.

A sufficient number of Flamingants became Activists to create a serious problem. But the vast majority of Flemings refused to have anything to do with the Germans, repudiated all suggestions that the Flemish question might be solved by their Teutonic brothers, and adopted a policy of "passivism." Practically all the leaders whose names were mentioned in the last chapter took this position. This was true of the once

[31] *Vrij Vlaanderen.*

[32] *Vlaamsche Voorwachten.*

[33] *Vlaamsche Arbeidersgemeenschap.*

[34] *Groeningerwacht.*

[35] *Archives du Conseil de Flandre.* pp. 367, *et seq.*

radical A. Vermeylen; of the Socialists, Anseele and Huysmans; of the Catholics, Van de Perre, Van Cauwelaert, and Van de Vijvere; of the Liberals, Louis Franck, Julius Hoste, Jr., and M. Sabbe; and of a host of others. Every Activist move received their condemnation; every Activist bid for their aid was refused; and every Activist reform effected by the Germans met with their opposition. During the course of the present chapter we shall have more than one occasion to mention the policy of the Passivists and to show what numerical strength they possessed.

As is well known to those acquainted with the invasion of Belgium, many Flemings fled to Holland upon the approach of the German armies in 1914. Like the people in Flanders, these refugees were confronted with the problem of deciding whether they should support the Activist or the Passivist platform. At first many of the prominent *émigrés* united in the publication of a daily newspaper, *De Vlaamsche Stem*.[36] But from the time of its inception (the end of 1914) division appeared among the editors. On July 15, 1915, just after the Flemish national holiday celebrations at Bussum, two of the editors, who had been school teachers, de Swarte and René de Clercq, sent a telegram to King Albert expressing their desire for an autonomous Flanders.[37] This was the signal for the resignation of certain of the paper's editors, among others Van Cauwelaert who had been a power behind the *Stem* and who now founded a weekly, *Vrij België*, with a Passivist bent. The Minister of Arts and

[36] A. Jacob, *De Vlaamsche Stem*. Amsterdam: De Sikkel. 1926.

[37] René de Clercq, *Havere tegen Vlaanderen*. Utrecht. p. 7.

Science, Poullet, of the Belgian government at Havre appeared in Holland and had de Clercq dismissed from the Belgian school at Amsterdam and Jacob deprived of the right to teach in Belgian schools—an indication of the treatment Activists could expect if the Belgian government were restored. In January, 1916 *De Vlaamsche Stem* was abandoned and *Vrij België,* under the editorship of Van Cauwelaert and Julius Hoste, Jr., became the chief reflector of Flemish opinion abroad. The large majority of Flemings who had fled to Holland as well as those who had remained in Belgium adopted the Passivist point of view; only a small minority approved the Activist stand.

The Germans Effect Flemish Reforms, July, 1915—December, 1916

As we have seen earlier in this chapter, the German organization for governing Belgium included in the Political Bureau a section on internal politics. This section began to study the Flemish question in the spring of 1915. In making the study members of the section had of necessity to seek information from the natives and, as most of the former leaders of the Flemish movement had become Passivists and had refused to have anything to do with the invaders, the Germans got their information from the Activists—from the most advanced elements in Flanders. By June, 1915, more or less regular meetings were being held between Germans and a group of Activists led by August Borms, a former secondary school teacher.

The Germans were evidently impressed by the chance

to profit from the platform of the Flamingants. In the early spring of 1916 measures were taken to accord certain of their demands. Just prior to the outbreak of War a law had been made [38] which aimed at settling the linguistic problem in primary schools. It provided, as we have seen, that children should receive their elementary education in their mother tongue.[39] This law the Germans attempted to enforce rigorously by issuing a number of decrees in the first months of 1916 to ensure obedience to it.[40] Moreover, steps were taken to enforce the Belgian law of May, 1878, regarding the use of Flemish in administrative affairs. The German government proved to be more anxious than the Belgian government that all relations between the central authorities and public and private persons in Flanders be in Netherlandish.[41] As part of their policy the Germans required that the language used in the postal service in Flanders be Flemish.[42] In the fall of 1916 the Ministry of Arts and Sciences was divided into two sections, one Walloon and the other Flemish, in order that the linguistic and cultural aims of the Flemings might have a greater guarantee of fulfillment.[43] This division was prophetical of a much more

[38] *Moniteur.* May 22, 1914.

[39] See above, p. 157.

[40] Decrees of February 25, 1916; March 18, 1916; April 22, 1916; April 29; April 30; May 17; June 15; and October 4. *Gesetz und Verordnungsblatt für die Okkupierten Gebiete Belgiens.*

[41] Decree of September 2, 1916. *Gesetz und Verordnungsblatt.* p. 2621.

[42] *Gesetz und Verordnungsblatt.* 1916. p. 2901.

[43] Decrees of October 25 and December 13, 1916. *Gesetz und Verordnungsblatt.*

important partition which was being planned—the administrative division of Belgium.

The most important act of 1916 was the reopening of the University of Ghent as a Flemish institution—one of the most cherished planks in the Flemish platform. It is uncertain at just what time the Germans decided on the advisability of such a move, but in December, 1915, funds were made available for the reform. All the universities had remained closed after the invasion and when in the winter of 1915-1916 [44] they had been asked to reopen they had refused, for they had realized that they would be subjected to German censorship. Repulsed in this first move the Germans had sent letters to the professors of the University of Ghent asking them if they could and would give their courses in Flemish. All but five had refused, and two, the historians Paul Fredericq and Henri Pirenne, so flatly that they had been deported to Germany. Despite this rebuff the Germans continued with their plans and on March 15, 1916 decreed that the University would be reopened and that the courses would be given in Flemish.

The "Flemish University" was received with great joy by the Activists, and with dismay by the Passivists. Before the final decision had been taken a number of the Passivists had expressed their opposition to the change. On the initiative of the Liberal Flamingant, Louis Franck, they had addressed a forceful letter of

[44] See von Dyck, "Die Umwandlung der Universität Gent in eine Flämische Hochschule," *Deutsche Revue*. 1917. pp. 77, *et seq.*

Th. Heyse, *Index documentaire. L'Université flamande*. Ghent: Vanderpoorten. 1918. v. I, p. 5.

protest to Governor-General von Bissing.[45] They had first attempted to prove the illegality of the Flemish University by calling attention to article 43 of the convention of the Hague:

"The authority of legal power having passed in fact into the hands of the occuping power, this power will take all measures in order to reëstablish and to assure, as far as possible, order and public life in respecting, except when absolutely hindered, the laws in force in the country."

They had then gone on to say:

"How will history judge us Flemings if at this time, when our soldiers are still struggling against yours in the trenches, we should accept from the hands of conquerors any advantage whatsoever even though this advantage might appear to repair the injustices of the past? We are of a race which has always managed its own affairs on its own soil.

"We take the liberty, Your Excellency, to ask you to consider seriously and attentively these considerations. We hope that, if the project of which we have spoken has really been conceived, our arguments will appear to be such that it will not be realized and we express this hope in the interest even of the Flemish cause.

"No matter how difficult the circumstances may be, it is well that the occupying power should have no misapprehensions about our opinion and should not rest under the impression that there exists as regards the international situation the slightest difference of viewpoint between Flemings and Walloons.

"Thus, as one of us said recently in a public meeting

[45] January 8, 1916. Heyse, *op. cit.*, v. I, p. 23.

of the Communal Council of Antwerp, the only position that we Flemings can take is that of the independence of the Belgian nation." [46]

This letter apparently had no effect on German policy and preparations for opening the University were made. It was not an easy task, however, actually to establish the proposed institution. Professors had to be found; students had to be convinced of the advisability of attendance; and the Flemish population had to be assured of the good will of the founders. As has been stated, practically all of the regular professors of the University refused to continue their services under the new *régime* and most of the really illustrious Flemish intellectuals scorned the thought of teaching under such circumstances. Therefore, when the University opened in the fall of 1916, the forty-three members of the faculty included fourteen of Dutch citizenship, six of German, one of Luxemburg, and only twenty of Belgian.

There was also some difficulty in securing an adequate number of students. Many of the Flemings of university age were at the front and those at home were skeptical of the value of the new institution. Registration was encouraged by the award of a number of scholarships and the promise of immunity from certain military regulations. Nevertheless, in the first year there were only 216 students and in the second

[46] This letter bore the signatures of Louis Franck, Jan de Vos, Burgomaster of Antwerp, A. Vermeylen, professor at the University of Brussels and former leader of the *Van Nu en Straks* group, Paul Fredericq, professor of history at the University of Ghent, Anseele, the Socialist leader, and several other prominent Flemings.

417—a small per cent of the normal attendance at the University.[47]

The instruction which was given followed quite closely that of pre-war times. The faculties of philosophy and letters, law, science, and medicine as well as the schools of commerce, agriculture, and horticulture were all opened.[48] There is no doubt that many of the professors were pro-German, but it is an exaggeration to state that the university was merely an organ of German propaganda. The Activists, on the whole, did not look upon it as "German"; they considered it to be "Flemish" and a satisfaction of the Flamingant demand for a Flemish university.[49]

The students at the University represented nearly all phases of Flemish thought, though most of them, as their presence indicated, held Activist views. The more ardent students united in an organization, Faithful and Loyal.[50] An insight into the student activity of those days may be obtained from the two student publications, the weekly *Onze Hoogeschool* and the bimonthly *Aula*. The sentiment among the students was pro-Dutch and pro-Flemish, but not pro-German. At nearly every important university function the ceremonies were terminated by singing *William of Nassau*, the Dutch national anthem, and the *Lion of Flanders*. On no occasion did the students sing *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*.[51]

[47] Henri Pirenne, *La Belgique et la guerre mondiale*. p. 219.

[48] Heyse, *L'Université flamande*. pp. 200, 201.

[49] See the speech by the first Rector, P. Hoffmann, to the students, October 16, 1917. Reprinted in Heyse, *op. cit.*, pp. 128, 129.

[50] *Hou ende Trou*.

[51] *De Vlaamsche hoogeschool te Gent, 1916-1918. Verweerschrift van het Gentsche studentencorps Hou ende Trou*. Ghent: Plantijn. 1919.

Creation of the Council of Flanders

The founding of a Flemish university and the enforcement of already existing linguistic laws by no means satisfied the Activists. They were convinced that Germany would win the war and that they should now attempt to secure reforms and to wring concessions from that nation rather than from Belgium. They hoped to realize the Flamingant program during the conflict and to present the world with a *fait accompli* upon the restoration of peace. Henri Pirenne goes so far as to state that had they dreamed of German defeat they would never have done what they did.[52] At all events the most advanced Activists wanted to effect as soon as possible either the administrative partition of Belgium or the independence of Flanders. When the Germans made their first peace proposals, the Activist leaders thought that the time had come to take the initiative.[53] They believed that this offer for peace and Wilson's note in favor of oppressed peoples would lead to negotiations and a victorious German peace in which the Flemish question would be satisfactorily solved.[54]

The Activist leaders, however, were not united as to the measures to be taken. In order to get a consensus of Activist opinion a meeting of forty-six chiefs was held at Brussels, January 7, 1917, under the presidency

[52] H. Pirenne, *La Belgique et la guerre mondiale.* p. 221.

[53] These proposals were made December 12, 1916. G. Lowes Dickinson, *Documents and Statements Relating to Peace Proposals and War Aims.* London: Macmillan. 1919. pp. 2-6. For the attitude of the Activists see *Borms voor het gerecht. Akte van beschuldiging.* p. 230.

[54] Th. Heyse, *La Genèse du Conseil de Flandre.* Brussels: Renaissance d'Occident. 1924. pp. 5, 6.

of P. Tack, formerly a normal school professor of Brussels. After a long discussion it was decided "to demand for Flanders a complete and absolute independence, an autonomous government, and the immediate realization of all measures which can help attain this end." [55]

This reunion was followed by another, February 4, 1917, held at the *Vlaamsch Huis*,[56] a famous Flemish *café* in the Grande Place, Brussels. Between two and three hundred Activists were present at this meeting. After some discussion sixty of them were chosen to constitute a Council of Flanders [57]—a sort of provisional government. A manifesto was prepared and published which stated:

"We have the right and the duty to organize . . . for the defense of our nationality, oppressed for almost a century, for our Flemish brothers, misunderstood and crushed, for those here [in Belgium] as well as those in French Flanders. . . .

"Fully aware of the patriotic duty which forces them to undertake the defense of Flanders, the mother of them all, Flemings, united in a national meeting at Brussels February 4, 1917, appoint from among those assembled members to the Council of Flanders and charge that body with the execution of the following measures for immediate application:

"Distribute this manifesto among the Flemish people;

"Communicate the greetings of the Flemish people to all neutral and belligerent powers;

[55] *Les Archives du Conseil de Flandre.* p. 476. *Borms voor het gerecht.* Brussels: Ons Vaderland. 1926. pp. 7, 36, 37.

[56] Flemish House.

[57] *Raad van Vlaanderen.*

"Take measures necessary to secure a hearing of the representatives of the Flemish people and to obtain the recognition of the rights of the Flemish people at the coming peace conference. May Flanders grow by the union which gives strength. So help us God.

"In the name of the National Flemish *Landdag*.

"The Council of Flanders."

The members of the Council of Flanders were all Activists, among whom were to be found August Borms, P. Tack, L. Dosfel, whose names have already been mentioned, and a number of other persons of a similar persuasion. Most of them were teachers and lawyers; few of them had held high offices of state prior to the War. They were men without great practical experience in managing governmental affairs. Nevertheless, they undertook with enthusiasm the task of establishing a provisional government for Flanders. They prepared an oath of allegiance which was required of everyone upon assuming office: "I swear allegiance to the Flemish people. I promise to work for and to preserve the independence of Flanders and to keep secret whatever the Council orders. So help me God." They organized the usual departments of government—interior, arts and science, foreign affairs, etc., and made provisions whereby questions studied by these departments should be referred to the Council for consideration. In fact, the rough framework of a real government was set up.

The Council was not, however, free to act as it saw fit; the Germans controlled its every move. A German representative [58] was attached to the Council and mem-

[58] *Kommissar des Verwaltungschefs beim Rat von Flandern.*

bers of the German Political Bureau met each week with the Council's president, vice-president, and two secretaries;[59] the expenses of the Council were met by the Germans;[60] and when the Council planned to draft a constitution for the proposed state of Flanders, a German was placed at the head of the commission charged with the task.[61]

The Administrative Division of Belgium

The members of the Council were not united in their plans for the future of Flanders; some wanted a free and independent Flemish state, while others desired a federal organization of Belgium with both Flanders and Wallonia enjoying a large amount of autonomy. Although a majority preferred the former scheme, it was decided that it would be better to achieve independence gradually and that, as a step in that direction, administrative division would be advisable. This procedure having been determined upon, a commission of the Council went to von Bissing and explained their case to him, February 7, 1917. He heard their arguments and admitted that he favored the plan but that the best course was for the commission to go to Berlin and talk with Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg. This it

[59] Straetmans, *Akte van beschuldiging in cause de Tack.* Brussels: Bruylant. 1920. p. 12.

[60] *Les Archives du Conseil de Flandre.* p. 10. Straetmans, *Aperçu sur l'activisme.* Brussels: Lorcier. 1920. p. 7.

In 1918 the expenses were covered by article 32 of the German budget for Belgium. See *Gesetz und Verordnungsblatt für Flandern.* 1918. No. 73. p. 26.

[61] Th. Heyse, *La Haute direction du Conseil de Flandre.* Brussels: La Renaissance d'Occident. 1924. p. 9.

was decided to do and the commission, headed by P. Tack and A. Borms, left for the German capital. The widest publicity was given their departure in the hope that international attention and sympathy might be won.

Bethmann-Hollweg received the commission March 3, 1917. He gave his visitors a cordial welcome, remarked about the affinities of language and race between Germans and Flemings, and expressed his interest in the Flemish cause. But most important of all he assured them, "I am completely in accord with the Governor-General. . . . The line of political conduct which you yourselves have chosen and which is in agreement with the principles of international law will be continued without respite and even during the occupation the administrative division will be realized according to the desires of the two parts of Belgium. . . ." [62]

The Activists were of course elated at this promise, but, as has been pointed out, they represented only a small portion of the Flemish people. The Passivists regarded Bethmann-Hollweg's statement with dismay. On March 10 they addressed a protest to the German Chancellor. The members of the Council were described as "unknown personalities who, in the full course of war, have taken it upon themselves to ask the assistance of the German government in dividing this land, Belgium, and in changing its internal institutions and who have no real right to speak in the name of the Flemish people or in any way to present

[62] *Archives du Conseil de Flandre.* pp. 429, 430.

their wishes and desires." They maintained that the Activists were traitors to their country.

"In complete freedom our Flemish population elected its representatives in the persons of 113 deputies and 37 senators, 170 altogether, of whom only two have joined in Activist policies. . . .

"The Flemish country and the Flemish movement have been represented for many years by great and powerful literary and political associations. . . . All of them have refused to support the anti-patriotic policy. On the contrary, their chiefs and representatives have energetically opposed it as is witnessed by the protest which they addressed to General von Bissing, January 8, 1916, concerning the University of Ghent. . . .

"You stated in your declaration that the linguistic frontier ought to become as soon as possible the boundary between the two regions united under the authority of the Governor-General and that these regions ought to be separate from an administrative point of view.

"Our reply to this policy will be brief: administrative division has never been part of the Flemish program. . . . Flemish Belgians are not a race incorporated by force in some large country. They are free agents in a free democracy. They are, in a general way, masters of their own destinies and they have not awaited the coming of a foreigner to satisfy whatever grievances they might have concerning languages. . . . All of us, Flemings and Walloons, have at this time a single desire, a single thought—Belgium free and indivisible." [63]

[63] This statement was signed by Louis Franck, deputy from Antwerp; Borginon, deputy from Brussels; Canon E. Luytgaerens, general secretary of the *Boerenbond;* A. Vermeylen, and sixty-three other prominent Flemings. See Fernand Passelecq, *La Question flamande et l'Allemagne.* Paris: Berger-Levrault. 1917. pp. 180-189.

But despite this protest administrative division was realized. On March 21, 1917, von Bissing decreed:

"Two administrative regions are formed in Belgium. One comprises the provinces of Antwerp, Limburg, East Flanders, West Flanders, and the arrondissements of Brussels and Louvain (of the province of Brabant). The other includes the provinces of Hainault, Liége, Luxemburg, Namur, and the arrondissement of Nivelles (of the province of Brabant). The administration of the first of these regions will be directed from Brussels, that of the second from Namur." [64]

Measures were immediately taken to put this decree into effect. Namur was actually made the capital of Wallonia and Brussels that of Flanders. New governmental machinery was established in both places; new officials were appointed to serve in their respective regions; and new governmental publications were founded. The administrative division of Belgium was by no means fictitious; it was very real.

This move was, as has been said, but a step toward a free and independent Flanders and it had hardly been realized before agitation for independence was begun. A special German commission [65] was appointed to study the advisability of such a move. For its part, the Council of Flanders debated the matter and on December 22, 1917, came to the decision that the political independence of Flanders should be declared.[66]

[64] *Gesetz und Verordnungsblatt für die okkupierten Gebiete Belgiens.* No. 224. Also published in J. Pirenne and M. Vauthier, *La Législation et l'administration allemande en Belgique.* p. 257.

[65] *Kommission zum Ausbau der Selbstverwaltung in den flämischen und wallonischen Landesteilen.*

[66] J. Pirenne and M. Vauthier, *op. cit.,* pp. 93-105.

"The Council of Flanders announces that in general assembly December 22, 1917, it solemnly and unanimously proclaimed the independence of Flanders.

"Thus it considers that the mandate which was given it by the *Landdag* of February 4, 1917 has been fulfilled and it decides that it should proceed to the formation of a constituent assembly and in so doing should have recourse to a popular election on the broadest electoral base in conformity with the right of the self-determination of peoples.

"The oppression under which the Flemish people has lived since 1830 has ceased.

"The state of Flanders is born.

"Flanders follows the great current of world politics: the independence of nationalities.

"The Flemish people has finally been saved.

"God helps those who help themselves." [67]

It was one thing to issue such a statement but a vastly different thing to put it into effect. The declaration's greatest value lies not in what it actually accomplished but in the fact that it shows the temper of the Activists. The Germans, for their part, were by no means ready to recognize the independence of Flanders and they refused to allow the Council's resolution as quoted above to be made public; they insisted on a milder declaration which substituted "autonomy" for "independence." Actually, however, the Germans never treated Flanders as an autonomous state, but as a dependency.[68]

The Passivists also opposed the action of the Council. A number of them who had held office either as

[67] *Archives du Conseil de Flandre.* p. 143.

[68] Henri Pirenne, *La Belgique et la guerre mondiale.* p. 260. *Archives du Conseil de Flandre.* pp. 143, *et seq.*

senators or as deputies joined in voicing their disapproval (January 3, 1918) to von Hertling, who had succeeded Michaelis October 31, 1917, as Chancellor of the German Empire.

"The so-called Council of Flanders has no public mandate in Belgium. It is foreign to both our constitution and our legal institutions. One does not know how it was born or by whom willed. . . . Excellency, we should not pre-judge the policy which your Government will adopt in this matter, but against the acts of those who attempt to tear in two their wounded country in the midst of war, we, the legal representatives of the nation raise an indignant and energetic protest. . . ." [69]

These sentiments were echoed and reëchoed during the next two months; protests came from Flemish communal and provincial councils, from Flemish associations, the University of Brussels, Cardinal Mercier, and many others.[70]

Activist Propaganda

Activists employed all the propagandist methods at their disposal in their efforts to bring the issues before the people. One of the most common means was the holding of public meetings. Following the administrative division of Belgium a large gathering was held at Antwerp, May 13, 1917, in one of the city's most spacious halls, the Thalia. Borms and Tack, both leading Activists, addressed this meeting in an effort to secure popular approval of their policies. In order to

[69] Fernand Passelecq, *La Magistrature belge contre le despotisme allemand.* Paris: Berger-Levrault. 1918. pp. 90, 91.

[70] *Ibid.*, pp. 92-125.

crush all opposition those who wished to speak were forced to go to the platform, a form of intimidation which proved extremely efficacious.[71] Similar meetings were held after every important Activist move. Following the declaration of autonomy a gathering was held in the Alhambra Theater in Brussels attended by 3,000 persons. At times Activist meetings were so numerous that one had the impression of a continuous political campaign. In September, 1917, thirty-two such meetings were held; in October of the same year seventy-eight; and in November one hundred and one. The Activists found that this method of propaganda was cheap and effective and they made great use of it. Several political organizations with an Activist bent carried on an incessant campaign in favor of Activism, and there were other organizations, not exclusively political, which aided the Activist movement. The most important of these was the *Volksopbeuring,*[72] a welfare organization whose primary purpose was to furnish food and clothing to the Flemish people, a task which was shared by the Committee for Relief in Belgium headed by Herbert Hoover, but whose secondary aim seems to have been the propagation of Activist doctrines among the people whom it served. Organized as a coöperative society its seventy branches performed a real social service, but it is almost certain that they aided Activism. One of the patrons of the *Volksopbeuring* was the Archbishop of Utrecht, Van De Wetering, and one of its leaders was a prominent

[71] Th. Heyse, *Index documentaire. Le Procès de l'activisme.* Brussels: Lamertin. 1919. p. 40.

[72] *Archives du Conseil de Flandre.* pp. 375, *et seq.*

Flamingant, H. Meert, a member of the Council of Flanders.

The most important means of propaganda was undoubtedly the press. There was a galaxy of Activist journals all of which were, like the associations, new creations, inasmuch as the existing papers adopted the Passivist point of view. There were only two Activist dailies, the *Vlaamsche Nieuws* of Antwerp, the mouthpiece of A. Borms, and the *Gazet van Brussel,* but there were many Activist papers which appeared once or twice a week. Among the more important of these may be mentioned *De Vlaamsche Post,* organ of Young Flanders; the *Nieuwe Gazet van Gent,* edited by the professors of the Flemish university; the *Morgenbode* of Ghent and the *Eendracht* of Antwerp, both Catholic and radically Activist; *De Vlaamsche Smeder* of Ghent; and in Holland the *Dietsche Stemmen* and *De Toorts.* The circulations of these papers varied greatly; the *Vlaamsche Nieuws* sold daily about 8,700 copies, the *Nieuwe Gazet van Gent* 3,500 copies, the *Eendracht* 2,500 copies, etc. But whatever their size, their bent was the same. Every one without exception preached the Activist point of view and some even the German. The invaders considered the propaganda of the press valuable enough to warrant subsidies to the more important journals. For example, Borms' paper, the *Vlaamsche Nieuws,* received from 1,500 to 3,000 francs per month. As a guarantee that these papers should carry news favorable to the Activist cause, a Flemish Press Bureau [73] was established, which sent "prepared" copy to the various editors. The German

[73] *Vlaamsche Persbureau.*

authorities advanced 45,000 francs to insure the creation of the Press Bureau; an investment which proved to be financially sound, since the Bureau's activities were so great that it actually made money.[74]

The Activists did not limit the sphere of their propaganda to Belgium, but extended it to Germany where they tried to win the sympathy of Flemish prisoners. From 1916 on the Germans made a definite attempt to concentrate Flemish prisoners in special camps. This facilitated the work of agents who distributed pamphlets by the thousand among the prisoners and even organized Activist meetings among them.[75]

That there might be some order among all these agencies for furthering the Activist cause, a Central Bureau of Propaganda was created in November, 1917. Its task was to allocate subsidies for Activist societies and newspapers, to study the reports of its provincial and municipal agents in an effort to meet local needs, to arrange meetings, to print pamphlets, and to oversee the work of Activist agents throughout Flanders. It had to rely on the Germans for support and it seems to have been given generous aid. For the month of April, 1918, its budget totalled 204,032.50 francs. Placed at the top of the pyramid of Flemish propagandist agencies, it played an important rôle in coördinating the efforts of those engaged in "advertising Activism."

So much space has been devoted to the question of

[74] *Archives du Conseil de Flandre.* pp. 361, *et seq.*

Rudiger, *Flamenpolitik.* pp. 38-42. See in this book especially the report of von der Lancken for August, 1917—January, 1918.

Th. Heyse, *L'Université flamande.* pp. 103 *et seq.*

[75] *Borms voor het gerecht.* pp. 15, 16.

propaganda in order to show the eagerness with which the Germans aided the Activists and the devotion with which the latter pleaded their cause, as well as to describe a very interesting example of war time methods of propaganda. It now remains to consider the success of this work; were the results commensurate with the efforts expended? Two answers are usually given to this question: the Activists maintain that they were commensurate with the efforts expended; other Belgians claim that they were not. To be sure, the Activist platform encountered grave obstacles. The Flemish population considered the Germans as enemies and not as redeemers and feared them "even bringing gifts" of linguistic reform. This opinion found ample confirmation in such documents as von Bissing's *Political Testament* and in the wholesale deportation of Flemish workers to Germany.[76] The consequence was that the vast majority of Flemings remained hostile to Activism; it was supported by neither the *Willemsfonds* nor the *Davidsfonds;* it was opposed by the leading Flemish newspapers; and it was spurned by those persons who had been considered the leaders of the Flemish movement. The opposition of the Passivists was suppressed as much as possible; newspaper articles were carefully censored; freedom of assembly was certainly not permitted. About the only means that the Passivists had to express their disapproval was to address complaints to the German authorities, but these received practically no publicity. Despite their seeming calm, however, the Passivists were by far the stronger

[76] Fernand Passelecq, *La Déportation et le travail forcé des ouvriers et de la population civile.* New Haven: Yale Press. 1928.

party in Flanders during the entire period of German occupation.

The "Second" Council of Flanders

Some idea of the unpopularity of Activism may be had from a study of the election of a "Second Council of Flanders," January and February, 1918. As we have seen, a new election was decided upon at the time when the declaration of autonomy had been issued. The council chose a permanent body of eleven plenipotentiaries [77] to act as its cabinet and to manage the elections.[78] The voting was, for the most part, a farce. The new members of the Council of Flanders were elected at mass meetings, *stante pede,* and in many places only those who held cards previously issued by the Council were allowed to attend the meetings. According to the Bureau of Propaganda 153 electoral meetings were held, attended by 49,578 people, a small percentage of the actual Flemish electorate.[79] But despite this travesty of popular sovereignty the new Council was declared elected and proceeded to the further realization of Activist policies.

At this point a curious incident took place. Belgian patriots thought to curb the activity of the new Council by prosecuting its leaders on the charge that their actions were crimes according to Belgian law. So the Court of Appeals at Brussels, which was still the Belgian court of pre-War days, ordered the arrest of

[77] *Fondés de pouvoir, Gevolmagtiden.*

[78] This act was opposed by the Germans. Decree of January 28, 1918. *Gesetz und Verordnungsblatt für Flandern.* No. 13.

[79] *Archives du Conseil de Flandre.* p. XLVIII.

several Activists.[80] Borms and others were actually taken prisoners, but only a few hours were necessary for the intervention of the Germans to put an end to this show of Belgian patriotism. The event resulted in the refusal of many judges to continue their legal functions and in their replacement by Germans.[81] The program of the second Council of Flanders included six points; three negative and three positive. The negative included: (1) suppression of the *status quo ante;* (2) abolition of the word Belgium; and (3) no economic war after peace. The three positive points were: (1) complete political independence of Flanders; (2) Flanders must be free to attend to its future relations with foreign states according to the necessities of its geographic position; and (3) Flanders expects the settlement of the Flemish question with German aid.[82]

The Germans refused, however, to allow the program to be made public, much to the irritation of the Council. In order to placate this body the Germans made promises and a few minor concessions. Flemish was made the only official language in Flanders [83] and was to be used exclusively in elementary schools,[84] and the Council was aided in putting an Activist stamp on municipal governments. Moreover, the Council was allowed to plan the formation of a Flemish Guard,[85] to be re-

[80] February 7, 1918. *Dossier de la Cour de Cassation.* No. 12.

[81] Decrees of April 6 and 7, 1918. *Gesetz und Verordnungsblatt.* No. 39.

[82] *Archives du Conseil de Flandre.* p. LI.

[83] August 9, 1917.

[84] June 4, 1918.

[85] *Rijkswacht.*

cruited from among Flemish prisoners in Germany, to draft a constitution for Flanders in collaboration with German political scientists, and to study methods by which the judiciary might be placed in the hands of Activist Flamingants. These concessions were not considered sufficient and representatives of the Council interviewed Chancellor von Hertling on two different occasions in the summer of 1918 but could secure no satisfaction.[86] It seemed to some of the Activists that the Germans were failing them at a very crucial moment. To express their discontent the Commission of Plenipotentiaries resigned August 17, 1918.

Frontism

While the Activist movement was developing and its leaders were altering the political organization of Belgium, certain Flemings in the army were carrying on a pro-Flemish, anti-Belgian propaganda. The Belgian fighting army at the front was composed of about 80% Flemings and 20% Walloons.[87] During the first part of the War, 1914-1916, the life of a Flemish soldier in the army was particularly onerous. He was commanded in French; the signs in the trenches were in

[86] *Archives du Conseil de Flandre.* pp. 436, *et seq.*

[87] These figures are probably not strictly accurate. They were given by Van Cauwelaert in the famous Flemish interpellation in the Chamber in 1919, and were not questioned by the Ministry. See *Annales parlementaires* for May 14, 15, 21, and 22, 1919. Doubtless the preponderance of Flemings at the front was due in part to their superior population in Belgium, in part to the fact that Wallonia was invaded first, and in part to the fact that unskilled workers in which Flanders abounds, were usually sent to the trenches while skilled workers, especially numerous in Wallonia, were kept at work behind the lines.

French and warnings of extreme danger were often not understood; doctors and nurses were mostly French-speaking and the medical care of Flemings was thus rendered difficult; and Flemish privates could not expect promotion because there were no examinations in their language for officers.[88] On account of these conditions an uneasiness developed among Flemish troops. In 1916 attempts were made to ameliorate matters. But the grumbling continued and the Belgian Minister of War, De Ceunick, sent a letter to Belgian officers in September, 1917, urging them to learn Flemish, and in the spring of 1918 a commission composed of leading Flemings was appointed to study the problem and to suggest reforms.

The uneasiness among Flemish soldiers was probably stimulated by vague notions of the Activist movement. The newspaper of a Catholic political leader, Van de Perre, *De Stem uit België,* published in London, *Vrij België,* edited by Van Cauwelaert and Julius Hoste, Jr. at The Hague, and *Het Vaderland,* a semi-official organ published in Paris, often came into their hands. News gleaned from these sources was supplemented by that in the papers published near the front, especially that in *De Belgische Standaard* of La Panne and *Ons Vaderland* of Calais. These last named journals supported the Activist platform and furnished soldiers with all the information possible concerning events in Flanders.

Gradually a loose organization was formed among the radical Flemish soldiers. On September 16, 1916, a little group of educated Flemings formed a Study Club[89] ostensibly for intellectual purposes but really

[88] *Ibid.*

[89] *Studiekring.*

to consider the "abuses" which they suffered. One of their first acts was to establish a fund for the erection of special crosses over the graves of the Flemish dead. These crosses bore the inscription V A V K, which signified *Alles voor Vlaanderen, Vlaanderen voor Kristus.* (All for Flanders, Flanders for Christ) and the picture of the sea gull, the symbol of the awakening of the Flemish youth to a sense of Flemish nationality. These crosses indicated the Flemish temperament of the Study Club members.[90] It was not long before the military authority realized the danger of the Study Club and took action against it by prohibiting its meetings, April, 1917. This only drove the agitation "underground"; meetings were henceforth held in secret.

Gradually the discontented Flemish soldiers formed a new organization, the Front Party.[91] It was organized secretly under the leadership of the "chief," [92] Adiel Debeuckelaere, a former secondary school teacher. He was assisted by an army committee composed of one or more delegates from each division.[93] The platform of this party as stated in October, 1917, demanded the administrative division of Belgium, the division of the army into Flemish and Walloon regiments, and the transformation of the University of Ghent into a Flemish university.[94] These ideas were propagated by trench newspapers, anonymous tracts,

[90] Rudiger, *Flamenpolitik.* pp. 116-118.

[91] *Frontpartij.*

[92] *Ruwaard.*

[93] Rudiger, *Flamenpolitik.* p. 123.

[94] *Ibid.*, p. 125.

and writing on walls. Of course, the military authorities condemned the agitation from the very first and dealt harshly with soldiers who were caught inciting their fellows to act against the *status quo*. Several of the so-called "Frontists" were accused of military insubordination and a number of them were sent to work in lumber camps under very trying conditions.[95]

Despite coercion Flemish feeling increased. Finally two soldiers succeeded in passing through the German lines, April 30, 1918. Their purpose was to learn what the Activists were accomplishing and to establish relations between the Frontists and the Activists. The German report on the interrogation of these men is most illuminating concerning the entire Front movement. The Frontists, according to their testimony, believed that a great Flemish defeatism would develop if the Germans made a successful attack on the Belgian army. The Council of Flanders received the two Frontists with enthusiasm and immediately enlisted their support in the Activist cause; it called upon them to speak at public meetings and to write articles about conditions in the army.[96] The Germans, for their part, redoubled their efforts to capitalize the discontent among Flemish soldiers.[97] Perhaps their propaganda had the desired effect, for the army committee of the

[95] See the speech by Van de Perre in the Chamber during the Flemish interpellation. *Annales parlementaires.* May 14, 15, 21, 22, 1919. See also *Het Zwartboek, de houthakkers.* Brussels: Ons Vaderland. 1919.

[96] See their pamphlet, K. de Schaepdrijver and J. Charpentier, *Vlaanderens Weezang aan den Ijzer.* Brussels: West-Vlaamsche Drukkerij. 1918.

[97] Rudiger, *Livre noir de la trahison activiste.* Brussels: Le Journal des Combattants. 1921. p. 72.

Front Party preached in June, 1918, surrender in case of a Belgian retreat, an overwhelming German attack, or a partial attack that endangered Flemish life.[98]

La Débâcle

Before any great defeatist movement was realized, the *débâcle* of the German forces began. With the defeat of the Germans at the second battle of the Marne in the summer of 1918, German interest in Activism began to wane. In case of defeat they realized that the restoration of Belgium would be unequivocally demanded.[99] From July on von Hertling intimated to the Activists that Belgium would have to be restored and in September Vice-Chancellor von Payer stated that such would be the case.[100] Some of the Germans in Belgium did not want to abandon the Activists in their hour of need and various schemes were proposed for continuing German support. There was actually little chance of doing much for Activism and on September 26, 1918, the Governor-General von Falkenhausen appointed from among the members of the Council of Flanders a commission of *Chargés d'Affaires* which was to salvage the Activist movement as best it could. This commission tried in vain to establish relations with the Passivists in Holland, some 7,000 of whom were organized in the *Vlaamsch-*

[98] Rudiger, *Flamenpolitik.* p. 335.

[99] G. Lowes Dickinson, *Documents and Statements relating to Peace Proposals and War Aims.* The Allies' reply to President Wilson's note of December 18, January 10, 1917. pp. 12, 13. See also the Fourteen Points.

[100] Speech at Stuttgart printed in the *Belgische Kurier.* September 14, 1918.

Belgisch Verbond under the leadership of Van Cauwelaert.[101] It still hoped to establish a provisional government for Flanders and to present the Allies with a *fait accompli.* But with the defeat of the German forces the Activist movement crumpled and fell; the Armistice provided for the integral restoration of Belgium. This, of course, sounded the doom of the Activists and the greater part of them fled to Holland before the approach of King Albert's victorious troops, while Passivists began to return to Belgium from all parts of the world. The Activists, once in Holland, tried to reassemble their scattered forces and formed a Flemish Committee to continue their work. This Committee attempted to get the attention of the Peace Conference; a series of telegrams and letters were sent to President Wilson and Colonel House but to no avail.[102] The Peace Conference considered the restoration of Belgium as a *sine qua non* to the reëstablishment of a peaceful Europe.

[101] *De Indeelingen van de belgische weermacht; verslag uitgebracht door de legercommissie van het Vlaamsch-Belgisch Verbond.* 1917. p. 47.

[102] These have been published in an English translation. *Pro Flandria Servanda.* The Hague: Nijhoff. 1920. pp. V-XI.

CHAPTER VII

The Political Phase of the Flemish Movement Since the World War

Introduction

When the smoke of battle had cleared away, Belgians saw at once that the mere cessation of hostilities by no means meant the end of their troubles and that it would take years to undo the mischief that had been wrought from 1914 to 1918. Among the many problems which they had to face the Flemish movement stood out as one of the most formidable. It was apparent that Flemish nationalism had made considerable "progress" during the War, despite the fact that the German defeat had knocked the supports, shaky as they were, from under the Activist movement. But it was much easier to recognize the problem than it was to agree upon a solution. The events of the War period had deepened those passions which nationalist movements always engender and Activists, Passivists, Fransquillons, and Walloons approached the Flemish question with a sensitiveness that boded trouble. In fact, the history of the Flemish movement since the War has been marked by the increased vigor with which each group has pursued its objective.

King Albert, acting as the mouthpiece of the Belgian government, was the first after the War to declare what the official attitude toward the Flemish question would be. While the King was still advancing with

his troops close on the heels of the evacuating Germans and before he had reëntered Brussels, he met the leading statesmen of his country at Lophem, a little village near Bruges, to discuss with them the political problems of Belgium which needed immediate attention. Among the things which were considered the Flemish question was one of the most important. The Passivist Van Cauwelaert was there to represent the Flamingants; no Activist was invited to present the most advanced Flemish views. Although the details of this colloquy are still secret, it is certain that Van Cauwelaert, while condemning Activism, demanded reform. At least the King took a Passivist stand in his address to the legislative chambers on November 22, 1918.

"The necessity of a fecund union demands the sincere coöperation of all the children of a single nation without distinction as to origin or language. In the domain of languages the strictest equality and the most absolute justice will characterize bills which the Government will submit to the national representatives. Thus will be realized an accord destined to perpetuate national unity and indivisibility such as were manifested during the War by the sacrifice of so much blood. [Cheers.] A reciprocal respect of interests of the Flemings and the Walloons ought to exist in the administration in order to give each one the certainty of being understood in his language and to assure him his full intellectual development especially in higher education. [Hear, hear.] That the functionary, the magistrate, the officer, ought to know the language of those whom they serve is a rule of elementary equity. It is even to the interests of the country that each of our two populations be able to develop fully in its own language its personality and its originality, its intellectual talents, and its faculties of

art. The Government will propose to Parliament the creation of a Flemish university at Ghent with the provision that there be reserved to the Chamber, which follows the elections, the right to take the necessary measures.

"The leaders of those who at the critical hour, when the existence and the future of the country were in question, aimed to effect her ruin [the Activists] will have no amnesty. [The entire assembly rose to its feet and applauded for several minutes.] The Flemish population has already cast away these leaders, but the guilty ones ought to submit to a just repression. [Again long applause.]" [1]

This speech reflects very well the point of view of the Passivists. They thought that linguistic and cultural reforms would satisfy the majority of the Flamingants and that the repression of the Activists would prevent the formation of future radical Flemish groups. At the time it seemed to many as though the coöperation of all in the realization of this program might, in truth, do away with Flemish discontent. There were, however, several obstacles in the way. It was too great a stretch of the imagination to believe that all would agree to such reforms as the establishment of a Flemish university at Ghent; that all would work harmoniously in placing both languages on an absolutely equal footing in governmental affairs; or that the forceful repression of the Activists would not have its repercussions.

Trial of the Activists

The first thing that was done in the realization of the government's new Flemish program was to bring the

[1] *Annales parlementaires.* November, 1918.

Activists to justice. As was stated in the last chapter, most of the leading Activists had fled to Holland at the close of the War;[2] only a very few had remained behind to face almost certain condemnation by the courts. The result was that comparatively few of them were present for their defense during the trials; most of them were tried *absente reo*.

The judicial proceedings against the Activists caused feelings to run high. Belgian patriots looked upon these Flamingants as traitors and hated them as only traitors can be hated. Activist sympathizers looked upon the same men as martyrs and admired them as only martyrs can be admired. Under such circumstances it is easy to understand why many of the trials were so dramatic. The rehearsal of the events of the War during the trial of August Borms not only aroused the passions of those in the court room but of the people in the country at large. While the death penalty was being read to Borms, he interspersed the phrases with sobs of "Long live Flanders, long live Flanders"; sentiments which were shared by his followers,[3] but which were condemned by his enemies. The fact that little leniency was shown to the defendants increased the dramatic element. The sentences were, for the most part, extremely severe. Forty-five of the Activists were condemned to death, eleven to life imprisonment, twenty to twenty years imprisonment, sixteen to fifteen years, and sixty-five to shorter terms.[4]

Belgian authorities immediately imprisoned the con-

[2] A very small number had gone to Germany.

[3] September 7, 1919. See *Borms voor het gerecht*. Brussels: Ons Vaderland. 1920.

[4] See *Anti-30*. Ghent: Aers. pp. 26-30.

demned Activists who were within their grasp and confiscated the property of those who were beyond the reach of Belgian justice. Hardly had this been done, however, before clemency was sought for those who had been given the severest sentences. In time, an important agitation was begun for "Activist amnesty," a matter which we shall treat more fully later in the chapter. Suffice it to say in this place that none of the condemned were actually put to death and that by March, 1929, all were out of prison.

Flamingant Post War Political Groups

Upon the conclusion of peace Flemish political forces were, generally speaking, divided between those who considered that the Flemish question could be solved without changing the political structure of Belgium and those who could see no adequate solution without administrative autonomy, complete independence, or union with Holland. Whereas, those who had taken the former position during the War and had refused aid from the Germans had been known as Passivists, they were now nicknamed "Minimalists," because their platform was the Flamingant minimum, and those who had taken the latter stand, the former Activists, now became known as the "Maximalists," for they demanded the Flamingant maximum.[5] Like the Passivists, the Minimalists did not disregard their former political affiliations, but remained faithful to one or another of

[5] The terms Passivist and Activist are no longer employed accurately to designate distinct groups in Flanders. These words have descended to the category of epithets and are usually employed today in a deprecatory sense.

the three Belgian parties. Hence, it transpired that each party had a Minimalist wing. The Maximalists, on the other hand, following in the footsteps of the Activists, broke with traditional political groups and, writing Flemish nationalism in large letters at the head of their program, launched new political organizations.

The most important Minimalist groups have been those in the Catholic and Socialist Parties. This has been owing in part to the success that the Catholic and Socialist Parties have enjoyed in Flanders since the War and in part to the fact that the bourgeois Liberal Party has retained its anti-Flamingant tendencies. As we have seen in earlier chapters, the Catholic Party has always been strong in Flanders. It was therefore not astonishing to see one of the strongest Minimalist wings develop within its ranks. Under the command of a remarkable leader, Van Cauwelaert, who controls two Flemish dailies, *De Standaard* of Brussels and *De Morgenpost* of Antwerp, and who has served several years as Burgomaster of Antwerp and deputy, the Catholic Minimalist group has been the most potent factor in almost every post-war struggle for Flemish reform.

The Socialist Minimalists have been handicapped because, the stronghold of their Party being in Wallonia, they have been forced to concede many points of their Flemish program in order to keep harmony in their ranks. At nearly every Socialist congress there has been sharp friction between Walloons and Flemings. In fact the differences between them have been so great that certain of the Flemings have proposed openly the division of the Party along linguistic lines. This has never been done, however, and the Socialist Minimalists have supported the Flemish movement and yet have

remained in league with the Walloons. Their success has in no small measure been traceable to the leadership of Kamiel Huysmans, formerly Minister of Arts and Sciences. Huysmans after the War organized the Socialist forces at Antwerp for political action. Through his efforts imposing quarters were established and a daily newspaper, *De Volksgazet,* was founded. Backed by this organization, Huysmans has served several terms in the Chamber where he has played an important rôle in national affairs. The success of the Socialist Minimalists has also been aided by their organization at Ghent. Here the veteran Anseele has continued his success with coöperatives and has undertaken large business enterprises with capital furnished by Socialists![6] Since the War, his political strength has remained unimpaired; he has held office continuously as deputy and has served as Minister of Railways. Although his greatest interest is in bettering the economic conditions of his constituents, he has never failed to support Flemish linguistic reforms.

The Liberal Minimalist group has been the least important of all. Since the War the Liberal Party has failed to maintain its previous place as the second largest political group in Belgium and has been relegated to that class of political organizations which may hold the balance of power in an assembly or furnish continued opposition. Liberal Minimalists have been handicapped by the lack of a strong leader. Louis Franck, who was the political chief of Liberal Flamingants before the War, has not taken an active part in post-War Flamingant activities. The outstanding representative of this

[6] Louis Pierard, *Belgian Problems since the War.* New Haven: Yale Press. 1929. pp. 89-91.

group has undoubtedly been Julius Hoste, jr., editor of *Het Laatste Nieuws* of Brussels.

Some idea of the Minimalists' platform has already been given, but before turning our attention to other matters, it will be well to consider it in more detail. In the first place, the Minimalists maintained that Belgium must continue with her historical political arrangements. They believed that the Flemish question could be solved if Flemish were put on an equal footing with French in all public affairs, if Flemish were used in every administrative office in Flanders and if it were employed along with French in every one of the national central services. Their program specified concerning education: (1) that in all public and publicly subsidized schools students should be educated in their mother tongue, but that they should be taught the second national language after the third year; (2) that the mother tongue should be the language in which students should pursue their studies in secondary, adult, technical, trade, and commercial schools; (3) that the University of Ghent should be transformed into a Flemish institution; and (4) that the Ministry of Arts and Sciences should be divided between two undersecretaries, one for the Walloon section and the other for the Flemish. In order to avoid more trouble in the army it was proposed to organize Flemish and Walloon regiments and to leave each soldier free to choose between the two, and in order to do away with linguistic difficulties in the courts it was suggested that the defendant be allowed to choose in which language he would prefer to be tried. Some of the Minimalists, especially those in the Huysmans group, having learned from experience that the passage of linguistic laws was

only half the battle—that the enforcement of them was just as important as the enactment—added one more point to the program. They demanded that two commissions be named by the Chamber of Deputies in order to hear all complaints and to insist upon enforcement.[7]

The more radical elements, the Maximalists, held that this program was of no avail and that the Flemish question could never be settled unless Flanders were autonomous or independent. The most important Maximalist group was in large measure an outgrowth of the Flamingant soldiers' organization at the front; at least the name of Front Party was preserved. To the ranks of this party came the Activists who had remained in Belgium, Activist sympathizers, former members of the war-time Front Party, and some new converts. These men brought with them diverse political opinions; most of them had formerly been members of either the Catholic, Liberal, or Socialist Parties and they still cherished the social, religious, or economic *desiderata* of one or another of these groups. To unite them all under one standard was not an easy task. A bold attempt was made, however, and in order to minimize other questions especial emphasis was placed upon Flemish autonomy. The first plank of the Frontist platform read:

"Flemings must possess the right of self-determination as should every people, free from the interference of foreigners, thus of the Walloons. They must be masters of their own Flemish affairs and they must be able to decide with entire freedom what are Flemish affairs in Flemish territory."

[7] The program as thus outlined is based on electoral literature.

The Frontists treated all other questions in such a manner as to offend the least possible number of Flamingants. They demanded amnesty for political prisoners, a Flemish university at Ghent, and the abolition of French as a second language in the elementary schools of Flanders. In an effort to escape religious complications the Front Party took a neutral position and adopted the slogan, "A truce of God." [8] The economic part of the platform recommended the reclaiming of waste land, the nationalization of coal mines, an eight-hour working day, social insurance, higher wages for government employees, and the rapid development of the port of Antwerp. A decided stand was taken for disarmament, because, if the Belgian army could be weakened sufficiently, the Maximalists would have more chance of success in case of revolution. Reasoning in the same vein the Frontists took a position against all military alliances. When Belgium made a military agreement with France in 1921 they condemned it most heartily.[9]

Almost all the leaders of the Front Party—Herman Vos, Herman van Puymbroeck, Gustaf de Clercq, and Ward Hermans—were young men, fired with national enthusiasm; their zeal has been reflected in their propaganda. The two party organs, the weekly *Ons Vader-*

[8] This expression had been applied during the Middle Ages to the policy of the Catholic Church to designate certain days upon which fighting was prohibited, a measure aimed at reducing the evil effects of war. It had been applied during the World War to the political truce among the political parties, which had been declared in order to permit a coalition government at Havre.

[9] Herman van Puymbroeck, *Het Vlaamsche Front en de strijd voor de Vlaamsche zelfstandigheid.* Antwerp: Volksheil. 1925. pp. 28-30.

land of Brussels and the daily *De Schelde* of Antwerp, have often printed vehement, if not violent, articles. The former printed this warning in its edition of July 17, 1920, following the death of a Flamingant who had been killed in a riot:

"Conditions as they are will not last five years.
"Belgium, we demand nothing more [from you].
"Belgium, we no longer wish to be the slaves of your exaggerated policy.
"Belgium, the time has come for the great division. Flanders will obtain her full, yes, her full rights or Belgium thou wilt disappear."

Their public meetings have hardly been less sober. Passionate speeches are often accompanied by much waving of Flemish flags and the singing of the *Flemish Lion.* Frequently riots follow such meetings and on a few occasions there has been shooting with fatal results.

But despite such events the Front Party has maintained an important propaganda and has become the chief political organization of the Maximalists. It has not, however, had the field all to itself. In spite of the ingenious political gymnastics that the Frontists performed in order to get a platform which would appeal to all political factions, some Maximalists remained aloof from the organization. Many of the ex-Activists who had fled to Holland did not approve of it, for they were strong Catholics to whom this particular "truce of God" made no appeal. In 1921 they founded a paper, *Vlaanderen,* which was published in Flanders but which was edited largely from Holland. This move furnished the incentive for the formation of other Maximalist Catholic groups of a local nature such as the Catholic

Flemish National Association of West Flanders [10] and the Catholic Christian People's Party of Flanders.[11] Besides these Catholic organizations, a group of extreme radicals, who became discouraged by the slow progress made by political methods, formed at Ghent in 1926 the Flemish National Party.[12] It desired to throw off the lethargic methods of political action and strike out for the freedom of Flanders. This tendency of disintegration frightened the leaders of the Front Party and they made efforts to arrest it. They undertook a new incorporation of all Flemish Maximalists in a Federation of Flemish Nationalists, but up to the present time their efforts have not been crowned with success.[13]

Regardless of the tendency for the Maximalists to form small independent groups, the Front Party has not ceased to grow. In the elections of 1919 this organization made its début and managed to obtain 57,422 votes and to elect five representatives to the Chamber. In the 1921 elections, following the dissolution of the Cham-

[10] *Katholiek Vlaamsch-Nationaal Verbond.* Organ: *De West-Vlaming.*

[11] *Katholieke Christen Volkspartij van Vlaanderen.* Organ: *De Daad.* Their attitude is explained in Spectator (pseudonym), *Proeve van een politiek program voor Katholieke nationalisten in Vlaanderen.* Brussels: Gudrun. 1924.

[12] *Vlaamsch-Nationale Partij.* Organ: *De Voorpost.*

[13] The *Federatie der Vlaamsche Nationalisten* did, however, find itself strong enough to present the Princess Astrid of Sweden a memorandum of the Flemish movement when she arrived in Antwerp, November 8, 1926, just before her marriage with Prince Leopold of Belgium. *Memorandum överlämnat till Hennes Kungliga Höghet Prinsessan Astrid vid Hennes mottagning på Stadshuset i Antwerpen den 8 November 1926.* Antwerp: Jan van Ael. 1926.

ber, the Frontists secured 57,630 of the 58,769 votes cast for Flemish Maximalist parties and returned four deputies;[14] in 1925 they obtained 79,603 of the 84,143 Flemish nationalist votes and elected six representatives; and in 1929 nine of the eleven Flemish Maximalist deputies who were elected were from its ranks, the Maximalist parties having a popular vote of 132,962.[15]

[14] During the course of Belgian history one can trace a clear relationship between the attainment of Flemish demands and the extension of suffrage qualifications. It is only logical that this should have been the case, for, as we have already seen, the upper classes in Flanders have been for years French in language and culture. The Flemish movement has been led by intellectuals who have risen from the lower classes. Therefore it was to be expected that the law of February 7, 1921 which provided for obligatory manhood suffrage should increase the power of the Flamingants. Inasmuch as the Flemish provinces contain the larger portion of the population of Belgium, Flamingants should be able, if they can convince their fellow Flemings of the justice of their demands, to realize their program by political action.

[15] All of these figures except those for 1929 were taken from the Archives of the *Ministère de l'Intérieur. Administration des Affaires Electorales et de la Statistique Générale.* Those for 1929 were taken from the press. In 1921 the Catholic Party received in Flanders 532,015 suffrages and in 1929, 566,381; the Liberals received 197,707 and 216,260 votes in 1921 and 1929, respectively; and the Socialists received 287,991 and 373,556 votes in 1921 and 1929, respectively.

The first two cabinets formed after the World War were coalitions composed of Catholics, Socialists, and Liberals. The Delacroix Government was in power from November, 1918 to November, 1920. It was succeeded by a cabinet under the leadership of Carton De Wiart. The third cabinet after the War was a Catholic-Liberal coalition under the premiership of A. Theunis. Theunis remained Prime Minister until April, 1925, but he had three different cabinets during that time. A Catholic-Socialist coalition government came to power in June, 1925 with Prosper Poullet at the head. In May, 1926 this cabinet resigned and Henri Jaspar formed a Catholic-Liberal government which is still in office (1930).

It is apparent that the members of these small delegations to the national legislature cannot accomplish much among the one hundred and ninety other deputies. Nevertheless, they have remained true to a faith in political action. Although they themselves can accomplish very little, they keep goading the Minimalists to action; they always speak in Netherlandish, which is a most difficult and irritating thing to do in the Belgian Chamber, for many of the Walloons do not understand what is being said, and, if they do not openly mock the orator, they pay no attention to him. But the Frontists consider that long speeches and continual criticism of the government are cheap ways of carrying on propaganda and that the constant expression of their views may be of some avail.

The Front Party has representatives not only in the Chamber but also in the Senate and in many provincial and communal councils. At Denderleeuw, a town not far from Brussels, Flemish nationalists were able to secure a working majority in the Council. In July, 1926, a great demonstration was held in the city. The Burgomaster took an oath, not to Belgium, but to the Flemish people. The oath was a verse prepared by the Flemish national poet, Father Cyriel Verschaeve:

> Glorious land in mourning,
> Beloved in distress,
> Again be great and free,
> For we are true to thee,
> Oh Flanders, to the death.[16]

[16] "O, land van roem en rouwe,
Van liefde en lijdensnood,
Gij wordt weer vrij en groot.
Wy zweren houwe trouwe,
O. Vlaanderen, tot den dood."

Legislation Concerning the Use of Flemish in Administrative Affairs

Now that we have an idea of the post-War alignments of Flamingants, both Minimalists and Maximalists, let us return to a consideration of King Albert's Flemish program. As has been noticed, one part of that program was realized with alacrity, the trial of the Activists, but considerable hesitation was shown towards the execution of the other points. The Walloons, on the whole, opposed openly the King's suggestions and delayed action on them as long as possible. But the Flamingants were determined to enact the King's program into law and opened their campaign as soon as they had organized their forces. They evidently considered the most vulnerable point in the Walloon opposition to be that concerning the use of the two languages in public administrative affairs and it was on this point that they directed their first attack. The charge was led by the Minimalist chieftains, Van Cauwelaert and Huysmans. Feeling ran high in both the Chamber and in the country at large. Long debates took place in the national legislature; Walloon and Flemish newspapers engaged in acrimonious controversies. The Walloons repeatedly accused the Flemings of wanting to divide the country, while the Flemings protested that it was only just that the Flemish language should be used by the government in those provinces where it was popularly spoken. The Flamingant forces kept order in their ranks and by sheer numerical superiority came out victorious; the new law was published in the *Moniteur,* August 12, 1921.

The law divided Belgium into two linguistic sections,

the Flemish part comprising the provinces of Antwerp, East Flanders, West Flanders, Limburg, and the arrondissements of Louvain and Brussels in the province of Brabant; the French part including the provinces of Liége, Luxemburg, Namur, Hainault, and the arrondissement of Nivelles in the province of Brabant. It stipulated that state, provincial, communal, and all subordinate administrative services must use Flemish in the Flemish section and French in the French section. In order to avoid the creation of any linguistic *irredente* the law provided that provincial and municipal councils should be free to add the use of the second national language to that of the first, but that they were not free to substitute the one for the other. However, if the majority of the inhabitants of any municipality speak a language different from that of the linguistic section to which they belong, the communal council has the right to decide which language is to be used in local administrative affairs and, once having made a decision, other public administrations must conform to this choice. The knotty linguistic problem of greater Brussels, where so many people speak the two languages and where the remainder of the population is nearly evenly divided between those who speak Netherlandish and those who speak French, was solved by a bi-lingual *régime*. The law provided that all central state administrations in their relations with local persons, either public or private, must use the language of the section in which such persons reside unless requested to the contrary; that official employees who come in contact with the public must be able to speak the language of those whom they serve; that state and provincial local services must publish their notices in the language of the

commune involved or in both languages;[17] and that notices and communications addressed to the public by the central administration, as, for instance, by the post office, the railways, state banks, etc., must appear in the two national languages.

The Flemish Maximalists wished to provide a punishment for those who might break the law. There had been numerous infractions of earlier linguistic legislation and they wanted to put teeth into this act. Their efforts were met with stiff opposition by the Walloons and even the Flemish Minimalists did not approve the plan wholeheartedly. Hence the project was abandoned. But despite their failure the new law effected real improvements in the linguistic situation. Every observing traveller in Belgium has remarked with what regularity all public notices appear in both Flemish and French and those who have had much to do with the state personnel usually find that railway officials, telegraph employees, and post office clerks are able to satisfy the linguistic demands of persons whom they serve.

Legislation Concerning the Use of Flemish in the University of Ghent

The Flamingants established as their next objective the realization of their demands concerning the University of Ghent. We have already seen how devoted the Flemish leaders were to the idea of having at least one state university in which instruction would be given in Netherlandish. In a previous chapter[18] we have

[17] Upon the petition of 20% of the municipal voters or of 1500 of them, notices must be published in the two languages.

[18] See above, pp. 159-169.

discussed their attempts to determine upon a concrete mode of action and the decision of the Flemish University Commission to demand that all courses in the University of Ghent be given ultimately in Flemish, the transformation to take place gradually. In 1912 Franck, Anseele, and Van Cauwelaert had presented a bill to the Chamber which embodied the Commission's proposals. No action had been taken on this bill before the War, but after the conclusion of hostilities it was reintroduced by Van Cauwelaert who believed that it still represented the opinion of the majority of the Flamingants. There was, however, considerable opposition to it. The Maximalists were not content with the gradual transformation of the University into a Flemish institution and demanded that such a change should be effected immediately. Most of the Walloons and Gallicized Flemings favored the *status quo,* but, if a change had to be made, they preferred that a new university be created at Antwerp or that the courses at Ghent be given in Flemish and French.

With these conflicting opinions in the air the Chamber began the discussion of the question in 1922. Each group presented its plan and, as usual, the debates concerning the various proposals were filled with bitterness. On one occasion matters were at such a pass that one of the more reserved members in a conciliatory speech remarked, "Our linguistic divisions, the differences and the violence which accompany them, have at times made me fear for the future of the nation." [19] Slowly the Chamber went through the parliamentary travail of dis-

[19] Speech by M. Renkin. *Annales parlementaires.* November 30, 1922.

posing of the different proposals for reform. It refused the Maximalist plan as too extreme and defeated all suggestions for the creation of a new university. Finally it approved by the close margin of four votes the Minimalist proposal for the gradual changing of the University of Ghent into a Flemish institution.

But this did not settle the problem. The Senate refused the bill sent up to it by the lower house.[20] For weeks a solution of the deadlock was sought in vain. After many futile attempts the Minister of Arts and Sciences, M. Nolf, worked out a compromise which proved satisfactory to the majority of senators. His bill provided that Flemish should be the administrative language of the University of Ghent;[21] that in the faculties of philosophy and letters, of law, of science, and of medicine students should be given the choice of pursuing two-thirds of their studies in Flemish and one-third in French (the Flemish *régime*) or two-thirds of their studies in French and one-third in Flemish (the French *régime*);[22] that instruction in the clinics for candidates for the doctorate of medicine should be presented in Flemish; that Flemish courses preparatory to the degree of civil engineer should be created; that lectures in the schools of civil engineering and of arts and manufacture should be delivered in Flemish and French;[23] and that new courses should be established

[20] This action caused the fall of the first Theunis Ministry.

[21] Article 1. This article was later modified by royal decree to the effect that French might be used provided the Rector could not use Netherlandish and in certain other instances. See *Moniteur*. October 14, 1923.

[22] Article 2.

[23] Articles 3 and 4. It will be remembered that L. De Raet had demanded this reform.

to treat in Flemish subjects which had previously been taught in French.

This compromise was not received with enthusiasm by the Chamber. The Huysmans group of Flemish Socialists flatly opposed it; Flemish Maximalists regarded it as a mere travesty of their demands; and Walloons considered it as containing too many concessions. Only the Catholic Minimalists gave it their earnest support. Once again the Chamber was filled with nationalist excitement. But this time enough deputies, wearied by the continual bickering, joined the Van Cauwelaert group to form a majority and the bill was passed 87 to 75, July, 1923.[24]

The people of Belgium reacted to this law in much the same way as did the deputies. It was severely attacked by both foes and friends of the Flemish cause, by the former because it partially ostracized the French language from the University and by the latter because it did not provide for the exclusive use of Flemish. The Gallicized Flemings went so far as to create at Ghent *L'Ecole des Hautes Etudes* where students might study in French under university professors the same subjects which they would normally study in Flemish at the University. This enabled those who so desired to secure most if not all of their education in French regardless of the Nolf law. The Flemish Maximalists, for their part, opposed the compromise so heartily that they determined to boycott the "Flemish *régime*" at the University. This was, however, largely a pretext, for it was apparent that not many students would elect to take two-thirds of their work in Flemish under new and

[24] Published in the *Moniteur*. August 1, 1923.

unknown professors or under men who were hostile to Flemish. The Minimalists, on the whole, considered the passage of the Nolf law a victory and kept a vigil over its application. They supported the appointment of more Flemish professors and the opening of new courses in Flemish. When the law was first applied, conditions from a Flemish point of view were not satisfactory, but they have been improved with time and every year has witnessed an increased number of students enrolled in the Flemish section.

The period from 1923 to 1928 was barren of Flemish legislative triumphs. But 1928 ushered in a period of exceptional fertility in Flamingant reforms. Since that date an army reform act and an amnesty law for Activists [25] have been voted, and a bill providing for the transformation of the University of Ghent into a completely Flemish institution has passed the Chamber of Representatives. The Flemish movement seems, in truth, to have taken more rapid strides forward in the last three years than at any time in its history, with the possible exception of the World War period.

The reforms mentioned above were effected by the Catholic-Liberal coalition Government of Henri Jaspar (Catholic). Severe parliamentary struggles accompanied the voting of each of them, but the fight over the University of Ghent was the bitterest. In November, 1929, Prime Minister Jaspar resigned because the Liberal members of his Government refused to support a measure to make the University entirely Flemish. Later he returned to the Premiership, after the Liberals had promised to vote for the proposed plan. In Feb-

[25] See below, pp. 240-243.

ruary, 1930, the Chamber began discussion of the bill and on March 5 gave it their final approval by a vote of 125 to 24, and 7 abstentions. The bill provided that the administration of and the instruction in the University of Ghent beginning with the scholastic year 1930-1931 should be in Netherlandish, but that the technical schools should be permitted to continue instruction in French until 1935 when the French sections will be moved to Liége. Thus within five years the long fought for and much desired Flemish university will be a reality, if the Senate approves the bill.

The Army Reform Law of 1928

During the course of this study we have seen that, although Flamingants complained about the exclusive use of French in the army, their attempts at improving conditions were of little avail and that laws which made a knowledge of Flemish a prerequisite for a commission were not rigorously enforced. The linguistic complications of the War period showed the need for a thorough reform and after the conflict Flamingants gradually began to support a plan to divide the Belgian army into Flemish and French regiments. In 1928 the Minimalists led by Frans Van Cauwelaert prepared a bill which required that a soldier should be allocated to the regiment or battalion where that language is used which is employed in his native province or which is his mother tongue; that both languages should be placed on an equal footing in the Military School at Brussels; and that commissioned officers should know the language of the men under them. This bill aroused dire forebodings in the Chamber. There were those who

feared that the division of the army into Flemish and Walloon regiments presaged the ultimate division of the country. The Minimalists endeavored to quiet such fears and maintained that this was the only way in which the military linguistic problem might be settled. The bill finally became law in November, 1928, and was to go into effect in 1930.[26]

Amnesty for Activists

From the time that the Activists were condemned, advocates of amnesty were numerous. Many of them believed that the Activists had been punished illegally, for one of the laws by which the latter had been found guilty was a decree of April 8, 1917, issued by the government at Havre, a government which the Maximalists maintained had not adequately represented the Belgian people. Others thought that the Activists had been treated too severely by a revengeful government. Still others were of the opinion that, although the Activists should have been punished, the creation of martyrs only kept open old wounds and that the extension of clemency would do much to allay Belgium's political ills. The severe sentences which the Activists had received were gradually mitigated for those who had remained in Belgium; the terms of imprisonment were reduced and capital punishment was changed to life imprisonment. The case of August Borms is to the point. This man was sentenced to death in September, 1919; in January, 1920, his penalty was commuted to life imprisonment; and a short time later he was offered his freedom on condition that he would refrain from politics.

[26] *Moniteur*. November 7, 1928. p. 4638.

He refused the latter offer and remained incarcerated in the Central Prison at Louvain. He became the martyr *par excellence* of the Flemish nationalists. In July, 1924, and July, 1925, Maximalists held demonstrations at Louvain in order to show their disapproval of Borms' imprisonment. Riots accompanied these events and, when in 1926 it appeared that preparations for a real battle were being made, an order was given to prohibit the manifestation, and a substantial military detachment was detailed to enforce the measure. Undismayed the Flamingants continued their agitation. "Borms' chests" were created to finance propaganda, the chests being filled by proceeds from the sale of Borms' picture postal cards, Borms' flags, and amnesty stamps. Gradually the popular movement took on important proportions.

The question of amnesty attracted foreign attention. On February 8, 1928, the following petition was presented to the Belgian Chamber:

"We the undersigned, citizens of many nations, moved not by unfriendly feelings toward Belgium, but by the desire for a good international spirit, demand of you that Dr. A. Borms and the other condemned Flemish leaders be given complete and unconditional amnesty."

It was signed among others by John Galsworthy, Dr. G. P. Gooch, Professor H. J. Laski, and H. G. Wells of England; Victor Basch and Romain Rolland of France; Dr. H. P. Berlage, Dr. H. T. Colenbrander, Dr. N. C. Japikse, and Professor Dr. A. Verwey of Holland; and Jane Addams, Paul H. Douglas, Oswald

G. Villard, and Professor Harry Elmer Barnes of the United States.

By 1926 only two Activists were still in prison, Borms at Louvain and J. Van Exterghem at Antwerp, but the Activists in Holland were still living under the sentences which had been rendered immediately after the War. In 1928 efforts to pass an amnesty bill were vigorously renewed by Catholic Minimalists. The whole matter was brought to a head in December of that year when the Flemish Minimalist groups refused to put up candidates in a bye-election at Antwerp for the Chamber. This caused their support to swing to the still imprisoned Borms who was the candidate of the Maximalists. He received nearly twice as many votes as his nearest rival, a Liberal. Despite this overwhelming victory Borms was not allowed to take his seat in the Chamber and the Liberal was declared elected.[27] This action led to riots between Flamingants and Fransquillons.[28] The Senate took cognizance of the situation and on January 17, 1929, passed an amnesty bill (some prefer to call it a clemency bill) which had come up to it from the Chamber. This act opened the door of the prison to August Borms [29] and allowed the return of the Activists who had sought refuge in Holland; it did not, however, abolish the sentences which had been rendered, nor return the property which had been confiscated, nor restore civil rights to those

[27] Borms received 83,058 votes; M. Baelde (Liberal) 44,410. There were 58,052 blank ballots.

[28] There were riots, for instance, in the Grande Place, Brussels, December 9, 1928.

[29] J. Van Exterghem had served his term and had been released prior to the passage of this bill.

who had been condemned to more than ten years in prison. The law was, nevertheless, a Flamingant victory. Some of the Activists in Holland returned to Belgium, although the younger ones who had military service to perform and those who had become well established remained abroad. Borms left his cell. His release was the signal for Flamingant rejoicing. On February 3 a mass meeting attended by 6,000 people (according to Flemish reports) was held in Antwerp and this was followed by similar demonstrations in several of the larger cities of Flanders and Holland. Borms returned to the work he had left when he had been taken prisoner; he and the other Activists still dreamed of an independent Flanders.

CHAPTER VIII

Other Phases of the Flemish Movement Since the World War

Introduction

Although language has probably been the chief factor in the growth of nationalities, it has by no means been the only force which has tended to weld people together. In this task language has been aided by common historical traditions, common political ties, common economic interests, and common social concerns. From our study thus far it is apparent that the Flemish movement has been laboring without the aid of all these agencies. For instance, the historical traditions which live and have meaning among the Flemings are perhaps as much "Belgian" as they are "Flemish;" the political organization under which the Flemings live is certainly not common to them alone; the economic interests of Flanders are closely linked to those of Wallonia; and many of the Flemings' social concerns—religion, education, and modes of living—are also those of the Walloons. Undoubtedly these facts explain in large part why Flemings have been so slow in coming to a consciousness of their nationality. Flamingant leaders have long recognized the situation and of late the more radical ones have bent their efforts to fill the *lacunae*. In the present chapter we shall see what they have done since the World War to give the Flemish movement the

aspect of a broadly national rather than of a narrowly linguistic movement.

Post War Economics and the Flemish Movement

The historian who insists upon the economic interpretation of history would probably maintain that the Flemish movement can never be a success unless it has a sound economic foundation. If economics be the touchstone for divining the future of the Flemish movement, it will be of interest to notice briefly the Flemish economic situation of the present time. In an earlier chapter [1] we have seen that French speaking persons control big business in Flanders and that they have imposed the use of their language on those who manage their affairs. We have also noticed that most Flamingants, especially the more radical ones, have not been business men, but intellectuals whose economic resources have been very slight. We have also mentioned the fact that the economic interests of Flanders are closely linked to those of Wallonia, in truth, much more closely than to those of any other neighboring territory. Railway lines, canals, and rivers have forged so many chains that bind the two sections of Belgium together. Antwerp is the natural outlet for Walloon manufactured articles and Wallonia is Antwerp's most important *hinterland*. Wallonia has in a way been Flanders' economic complement: the former territory has furnished the latter with manufactured goods, and the latter has supplied the former with agricultural products. Thus physical conditions, habits of trade, and

[1] See above, pp. 54-55, 91-94, 171-174.

traditions of marketing have contributed to unite the two peoples of Belgium into a union which cannot easily be dissolved.

Nevertheless, Flemish nationalists have hopes of breaking the economic ties that bind Flanders to Wallonia and, in order to attain that end, they stress the necessity of Flanders' becoming industrially self-sufficient. There seems to be some indication that Flanders is becoming less dependent upon Wallonia for its manufactured goods, for in recent years the Flemish provinces have had a considerable industrial growth. According to the census of 1920 17.1% of the population of Flanders was engaged in agriculture, 42.7% in industry, and 19.3% in commerce, whereas for all Belgium the corresponding percentages were 15.2, 46.8, and 18, respectively. These figures are significant when one remembers that Wallonia became industrialized very early in the history of Belgium and that Flanders remained largely agricultural until the end of the nineteenth century. The Flemish textile industry, for years the only great industry in Flanders, has been steadily increasing. The coal mines in the Kempen have begun to produce; their output has increased from 12,000 tons in 1917 to about 2,000,000 in 1926. Around these mines are growing up new industries which will in time be of great importance. Already many glass factories have sprung up and one of them is expected to develop a capacity of six million square meters a year. The brick and tile industry in the southern part of the province of Antwerp has taken on new importance through the introduction of machinery; Flanders possesses a factory which produces a large part of the world's supply of radium; and the raw products from

the Congo—copper, tin, and diamonds—have given birth to new industries of imposing size on the soil of Flanders.[2]

It does not follow, however, that the position of the Flamingants has been strengthened by the industrialization of Flanders. Indeed most of these new industries are in the hands of Walloons or Gallicized Flemings. For instance, *La Société Générale* finances two coal mines in the Kempen and furnishes capital to many manufacturers of colonial products; *La Banque de Bruxelles* controls three coal mines; and *La Banque d'Outremer* finances most of the electrical plants in Flanders and has interests in the Ghent textile trade. Owing to such financial control, wherever Flanders has become industrialized, the number of French speaking persons has increased faster than in the non-industrialized regions. This has happened in Brussels and Ghent and it may happen in Limburg and Antwerp.

Flamingants have not failed to notice this phenomenon and to point out the danger that it holds for the Flemish movement.[3] They realize that the Flemish movement can never attain its ends as long as the economic power of Flanders is not in the hands of Flamingants and as long as the economic ties between Wallonia and Flanders are as close as they are today. For

[2] See *La Belgique restaurée.* Published under the direction of Ernest Mahaim. Brussels: Lamertin. 1926. See also F. Baudhuin, "Histoire économique de lat Belgique," *Histoire de la Belgique contemporaine.* Brussels: Dewit. 1928. vol. I. Also Robert Van Genechten, *Vlaanderen's economische ontwikkeling na den oorlog.* Bruges: Excelsior. 1928.

[3] Liederik (pseudonym), *Vlaanderen's ekonomische zelfstandigheid.* Antwerp: Flandria. 1917. See also Robert Genechten, *op. cit.*

this reason Flamingant economists urge the Flemish people to force their language upon the wealthy classes by refusing to do business with those who speak French, by creating coöperatives of all sorts, and by founding Flemish banks. They even encourage Flemish workers to go to the new industrial centers in Flanders instead of to Wallonia for work, so that foreign workmen will not have to be brought in to meet the new demands.

Various organizations have attempted to realize these ends. In the field of agriculture there is the *Boerenbond,* a league of Flemish peasants. From the time of its foundation in 1890 it has aimed at meeting every need connected with Flemish agriculture. It furnishes agricultural instruction by means of reviews, lectures, and demonstrations; it plays the part of a great coöperative for making purchases and selling agricultural products; it has several milk stations; it furnishes insurance of all kinds; it provides its members with legal advice; and it has a savings and loan bank. It comprises 1,123 peasant syndicates with about 100,000 members. In 1923 it bought and sold 91,268,636 kilograms of fertilizers. The *Boerenbond* bank, the *Volksbank van Leuven,*[4] has a capital of 30,000,000 francs. It has 189 branch and subsidiary banks, the most important of them being the *Bank voor Handel-en Nijverheid* of Courtrai, founded in 1919, with a capital of 10,000,000 francs; the *Algemeene Bankvereeniging* of Antwerp, founded in 1921, with a capital of 31,250,000 francs; and the *Banque de Renaix,* founded in 1919, with a capital of 12,000,000 francs. The *Boerenbond* has done much, in the agricultural sphere of Flemish life, to realize the ideal of the economic independence

[4] The Peoples Bank of Louvain.

of Flanders. Although it does not officially enter politics, its political sympathies are with the Catholic Flemish Minimalists.[5]

At Ghent a group of Liberal Flemings has built up another Flamingant economic network around the *Handelsbank* of Ghent. This institution, like the *Boerenbond,* has found its strength, despite its name, among the peasants. It has twelve branch agencies and fifty-seven auxiliary offices which are located for the most part in small towns and villages in order to utilize the savings of the lower classes. The capital of the Bank has increased from 2,000,000 francs in 1919 (the date of its foundation) to 20,000,000 francs in 1927. It helped to establish the *Fondsenbank,* with a capital of 15,000,000 francs, which operates in West Flanders, and also an insurance company, the *Noordstar,* and four textile plants.

All over Flanders there is a post-War development of industry and banking within Flamingant circles. Only one of the present-day large Flamingant firms—that of Gevaert Photo Products—dates from before the War; it was founded in 1894, and in 1926 it had a capital of 35,000,000 francs and did a business of 143,910,463.52 francs. There are, however, a number of new Flamingant firms as, for instance, the *Algemeen Beleggingskantoor,* an investment company which was founded in 1925 and whose capital has already increased from 5,000,000 to 10,000,000 francs, and *Mercator,* an insurance company which was founded at Antwerp in 1927 by Van Cauwelaert with a capital of 5,000,000 francs.

[5] A. Lugan, *Origine et organisation du Boerenbond.* Paris: Spès. 1925. Canon Luytgaerens, *Belgische Boerenbond, Verslag.* Louvain: Wauters-Ickx.

Under the leadership of Gevaert and Van Cauwelaert, a Flemish Economic Union [6] has been organized in order to bring all business enterprises directed by Flamingants into close contact with one another. Its purpose is to effect the "advancement of Flemish economic interests, the development of the use of the Netherlandish language in business circles, the promotion of economic relations with foreign Netherlandish speaking countries, and in general the development of its members' social needs, the creation of chambers of commerce and general economic groups, the holding of commercial fairs, the maintenance of an office equipped with the necessary machinery to keep in close contact with commercial, industrial, and financial affairs, the examination of the economic situation by means of periodicals and congresses and the diffusion of propaganda abroad." [7] Some of these ends have already been obtained and the Catholic Minimalists, who are the Union's leaders, are striving to realize the entire program.[8]

[6] *Vlaamsch Economisch Verbond.* Headquarters: Appelmansstraat, 25, Antwerp. Organ: *V. E. V. Berichten.*

[7] Article 4 of the society's constitution.

[8] It is quite natural that many Flemings should take a special interest in the Belgian Congo, for it is from Flemish Antwerp that trade is carried on with the colony. They have formed the *Vlaamsche Koloniale Studiekring* (Flemish Colonial Study Club) and have founded a colonial review *Zaïre.* Although their work has been for the most part of a scientific nature, the leaders are ardent Flemish nationalists whose ambition it is to maintain Flemish propaganda in the Congo so that, as long as Belgium exists, Flemings will be on the same level as Walloons in the colony and so that, in case of a political partition of Belgium, the Congo will not be lost to Flanders without a struggle. The organization of the Club is not very sound and its influence is not great. Its existence indicates, however, that certain Flemings recognize the economic value of the Congo to Flanders.

Catholic Flamingant Societies

As in the field of economics, so in other fields Flemings have been making serious efforts to free themselves from "foreign influence." In order to realize this end they have endeavored to put a Flemish stamp on education, religion, drama, social life, and, in fact, on every line of human interest. Take, for instance, the case of religion. Every little town in Flanders has its Church building and its priest, whose influence is very great. The priest is the guiding light in the community and his authority is only rivalled by that of the Burgomaster, the pharmacist, and perhaps one or two other strong local figures. The result is that when a priest is a Flamingant he can wield great influence. Large numbers of them are strongly Flamingant, especially the younger ones who have recently come from the student life of Louvain. Their nationalist activity has, however, been frowned upon by the higher clergy, especially by the late Cardinal Mercier. The Belgian patriotism of this man and his attitude during the War are matters of general knowledge. He did much to neutralize the effect of the pro-Flemish activity of the Flamingant elements in the clergy. Many claim that he had a clear cut policy of sending priests who were too active as Flemish nationalists into some little community where the effects of their work would be minimized, but the truth of such statements is very difficult, if not impossible, to establish. It is a fact, however, that certain Flemish priests have been changed from important positions to pastorates of meager parishes, but whether this has been done because of their Flemish activities or for other reasons is a very delicate ques-

tion. The hostility of the higher clergy to the Flemish movement is, nevertheless, certain. A letter which was sent to the clergy by the Bishops in 1925 makes this point clear.[9] It implored, if not ordered, priests to spend their time and energy on work for the Kingdom of God and not in labors for the kingdom of an independent Flanders.

The struggle between Flemings and Walloons in the Church came clearly to light in the spring of 1926 upon the death of Cardinal Mercier. No sooner was the Cardinal dead than Flemings and Walloons entered into active rivalry over the choice of his successor. Both groups made earnest representations at Rome. It is difficult to say who won the day, for Rome selected a man who was thought to be very neutral. The Flemings were not wholly discontented at first with the appointment, for they felt that Cardinal van Roey was a great improvement on Cardinal Mercier. Subsequent developments, however, have shown that Cardinal Van Roey is opposed to the extreme forms of Flemish nationalism.[10]

The religious difficulties along national lines are by no means limited to the secular clergy. In nearly every order of regular clergy the struggle is going on under much the same conditions. Flemish leaders of certain orders have plans for the establishment of a Flemish section of their order. For instance, certain Flemish

[9] Jos. Van der Meersch, *De Katholieke Leer over het kerkelijk gezag en de brief der Bisschoppen van België omtrent het nationalisme.* Bruges: Beynaert. 1926.

[10] See "Acta Curiae Archiepiscopalis" in *Collectanea Mechliniensia.* No. I. 1928. See also the letter which he wrote about this matter reproduced in *Vlaanderen,* February 15, 1930.

Jesuits argue that the province of Belgium is too great for one Provincial; that there ought to be two, one Flemish and one Walloon. Thus far they have not won their point, but their position is an interesting one.[11]

Among Catholics in Flanders flourish a number of organizations whose main *raison d'être* is to preach the doctrine of Flemish Minimalism. In the forefront of such societies stands the *Katholieke Vlaamsche Landsbond,* which endeavors to instill into Catholic organizations a Flemish consciousness and to unite them in a vast central body. This idea of concentrating all pro-Flemish Catholic forces existed before the War, and in 1912 it found expression in the creation of the General Catholic Flemish Secretariat of the *Landsbond.*[12] The War obliterated the Secretariat, but the idea lived on and in September, 1919, Frans Van Cauwelaert and his friends reorganized the *Katholieke Vlaamsche Landsbond* as part of their program to salvage Catholic Flamingantism from the turmoil in which the War had left it. The *Landsbond* has endeavored to establish connections with all Catholic organizations in Flanders and to win them to its support by well organized propaganda.[13]

Of much the same complexion is the Flemish National Society for Catholic Women and Girls.[14] Its

[11] This information was given the author by a prominent Flemish Jesuit. In 1612 the Province of Belgium was divided into two divisions following the linguistic frontier. Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique.* v. IV, p. 369. They were united later.

[12] *Algemeene Katholieke Vlaamsche Secretariaat.*

[13] *Volledig verslag zesde congres van den Katholieken Vlaamschen Landsbond.* July, 1925. Turnhout, 1925.

[14] *Vlaamsche Landsbond voor Katholieke Vrouwen en Meisjes.*

beginnings date from 1913, but the present organization was not created until 1919. It was formed on the basis of existing women's clubs, but since its founding it has been instrumental in the establishment of many new local groups. Its aim is to instill "a love of Flanders in Flemish women" and it endeavors to realize this end by means of propagandist meetings and a bimonthly review, *Gudrun.*[15]

Young Men's and Men's Patriotic Societies

In addition to the organizations already mentioned there are several others which may be classed as young men's and men's patriotic societies. In the first place there are those composed of Flemish boys. Not content with waiting until a child is able to understand political questions, Flemish leaders appeal to him as soon as he begins to read. They professedly say, "The Flemish youth of tomorrow will not think, they will feel." This is the aim of the Front Party's Flemish National Watch and of the Flemish National Union of Roman Catholic Youths. The latter society publishes a review, *De Nieuwe Jeugd,* whose articles suggest the nature of the propaganda directed at Flemish youths. The following quotation from the issue for June-July, 1926, is a characteristic one:

"July 11. Our National Feast Day, Flanders' Great Day.

"Flemish youths, this day will recall to you a glorious

[15] Angel Dosfel-Tysmans, *De Katholieke Vlaamsche Meisjesbeweging.* Ghent: Tspyker. 1924.

There also exists the *Nationaal Verbond van Vlaamsche Vrouwen,* but it is not very important.

past; our forefathers will pass before your minds, those men who after the victory in the plain of Groeninge raised their voices in a song of freedom—a song of triumph.

"You will this day remember with a feeling of love for your people that they were once free and great. You will have a feeling of affliction and mourning for the lost freedom and independence.

"Proudly marching behind the unfurled Lion flag we shall shout our war song.

"July 11, 1926 is a symbol of the fight.

"Inexorable—powerful, before the symbol: Dr. August Borms.

"Fight against the oppressor who has misunderstood and scoffed at your people for ninety-five years.

"No feast day, no song of triumph, as long as this oppression rests on us.

"Fight freely and proudly as Flemings for your land against all who hinder its full development.

"No middle ground, no half-heartedness, but straight ahead.

"Flemish visionaries, you will restore the old Christian Flanders. You will do this for love.

"Be great and strong. Learn love for the ideal.

"Make Christ King of yourself and of your Folk."

In Flanders the students, especially university students, are as a class the most nationalist of all Flemings. The national rivalry which pervades the Universities of Louvain and Ghent is most astounding to an American who is accustomed to find nothing more serious than "college spirit" among students. In both these universities there is a sharp line drawn between Flemings and Walloons. The difference is accentuated by the custom of wearing distinctive caps; Flemings wear

wine-colored *bérets*; Walloons wear dark blue caps; and the few "neutrals" wear grey, if they so desire. This remnant of the medieval custom of dividing university students into groups according to their places of origin has an interesting nationalist implication. Feeling between the Flemish and Walloon students at the Universities of Ghent and Louvain has been hostile since the War. Riots have been frequent and bloodshed not unknown.[16] Professors have not been immune to student feuds, Flemish students "ragging" Walloon professors and Walloon students retaliating on professors who display a pronounced Flemish bent. Sometimes groups of students have succeeded in ousting objectionable instructors by such methods.

In order to advance the Flemish cause Flemish students have formed patriotic associations. The largest of these is the General Catholic Flemish Students' Union, founded in 1919, which unites students from all grades of schools. An intense nationalist spirit pervades its quarterly publication, *De Blauwvoet*, and its annual congresses. At the 1924 congress in Bruges a mass of students gathered in the Grande Place before the statue of the heroes of the Battle of the Golden Spurs and swore "loyalty to Flanders, even unto death." Such a spirit is common to other student societies—to the Catholic Flemish University Students' Union, to the General Flemish University Students' Union, to the Flemish University Alumni Association, and to a num-

[16] The Universities of Brussels and Liége are practically free from such strife. *De strijd der Vlaamsche studenten aan de Katholieke universiteit te Leuven.* Louvain: Katholiek Vlaamsch Hoogstudentenverbond. 1925.

ber of special student societies and fraternities.[17] Almost all of these organizations support the Maximalist platform; they preach Flemish nationalism with all their force. *Ons Leven,* a student newspaper published at Louvain (evidently by the Catholic Flemish University Students' Union) carries but few, if any, articles about art, literature, history, and other intellectual subjects of interest to students. It has one subject—Flemish nationalism—and what is true of *Ons Leven* is true of other Flemish student papers.

In addition to the organizations already mentioned there are societies whose immediate aim is to put a Netherlandish stamp on education in Flemish universities. Among them is the Action Committee for a Flemish University of Ghent,[18] whose main interest is to secure the transformation of the University of Ghent into an absolutely Flemish institution. It was this body which conducted the boycott of the Flemish section at the University after the passage of the Nolf Law and which has advanced the Flemish demands for the creation of more Flemish courses. A similar organization exists at Louvain for the purpose of creating Flemish courses at the University there. Inasmuch as it is from lack of funds rather than from choice that

[17] In this connection mention should be made of Flemish student papers. The most important are *De Vlaamsche Vlagge,* a Catholic nationalist paper for secondary schools in West Flanders; *De Student* for Catholic colleges; and *De Goedendag,* a nationalist paper for state secondary schools.

[18] *Actiecomite ter Vervlaamsching van de Universiteit Gent.* See its two pamphlets: *De Wet Nolf* (Ghent: Tspyker, 1924) and *Boycott* (Brussels, 1925). Also Frans Daels, *Ik dien* (Ghent: Tspyker, 1923) and by the same author *Voor mijn volk in nood,* 2 vols. (Ghent: Tspyker, 1923).

this Catholic institution has not more Flemish courses, the work of the committee is largely limited to the solicitation of financial aid. Finally there is the Flemish Scientific Foundation, founded in 1928 with a capital of 1,000,000 francs, whose purpose is to give financial aid to deserving students who wish to study abroad. It is expected that the majority of students thus assisted will study in Holland and that they will strengthen the cultural ties between Netherlanders of the north and Netherlanders of Flanders.

In this survey of Flemish patriotic youth societies, mention should be made of the Flemish War Veterans[19] whose Flemish nationalism rivals that of the students in intensity. Many of them support the Front Party and most of them are agreed on the necessity of subordinating all questions to that of Flemish nationalism. Partly through their efforts a cult of the soldier dead has grown up in Flanders; every year a pilgrimage is made to the old battle front at Dixmude where over 35,000 persons annually pay homage to those who "fell for Flanders." [20]

The attempt of Flamingants to provide Flemings with a purely Netherlandish *milieu* has led to the creation of two other organizations which may be mentioned here despite the fact that they are not strictly limited to male members. They are the Flemish Touring Club and Flemish Public Houses. The former was established to keep Flemings from joining the *Touring Club de Belgique* and to care for their travel needs. During

[19] *Vlaamsche Oud-Strijders.* They publish a weekly paper, *V. O. S.*

[20] See *In bedevaart naar Vlaanderens doodenveld.* Temsche, 1924.

the summer months it organizes excursions to points of interest (usually of patriotic interest) and in the winter arranges illustrated lectures concerning Flanders. These means, together with a bi-monthly periodical, comprise the Flemish Touring Club's scheme for interesting its 60,000 members in the greater "development of the Flemish folk." The Flemish Public Houses were founded in order to provide Flemings, especially the nationalists, with café meeting places. The fact that the Council of Flanders held its first meetings in the Flemish House [21] in Brussels is evidence of the rôle that these institutions play in Flemish life. Since the War the number of Houses has increased and a loose union has been formed among them in order to concentrate their interests. The existence of such organizations under the control of Flamingants is an indication of the extremes to which the Flemish leaders have gone to provide a Flemish nationalist environment for the Flemish people.

Flemish Cultural Organizations and the Flemish Movement

In the field of culture Flamingants have displayed especial interest since the War in enlisting the support of intellectuals in carrying on Flemish propaganda and in organizing them into nationalist societies. Their activity among persons interested in the theater is characteristic of their aims. For years Flanders has had numerous dramatic societies, relatively as numerous as the *Gesangvereine* in Germany, but until recently they have had no central organization to direct their work.

[21] *Vlaamsch Huis.*

In 1911 the National Theatrical Association [22] was founded and it has grown until today (1930) it comprises 567 dramatic groups. There is also the Catholic Flemish Theatrical Central,[23] founded in 1927, which unites about 600 societies and among others one of the most unique and admirable of all European troupes, the Flemish Folk Theater. The Central sponsors a theatrical review [24] and maintains a printing establishment which distributed 10,274 pieces in 1927. For the most part members of these theatrical societies are Flemish Minimalists and hence their productions are not outstandingly nationalist. They have, nevertheless, produced two nationalist pieces with considerable success—*Thijl* by Anton van de Velde and *De Artevelden* by Cyriel Verschaeve. The former work is based on Charles De Coster's *Thijl Ulenspiegel,* which was written in 1867 in French. Van de Velde's Flemish version portrays the subjugation of Flanders in the person of "Nele" and her attempted salvation by the spirit of Flanders, "Thijl." This drama has been played with extraordinary success by the Flemish Folk Theater and it has brought De Coster's work into great favor among the Flemings.[25] Verschaeve's play, *De Artevelden,* rehearses one of the favorite chapters of Flemish history, the government of the Arteveldes in Flanders. Inasmuch as it describes the glories of Flanders' past, it has a patriotic appeal. It is this

[22] *Nationaal Tooneelverbond.*

[23] *Katholieke Vlaamsche Tooneelcentrale.*

[24] *Tooneelgids.*

[25] De Coster also wrote *Légendes flamandes* (1857).

sort of drama that Flamingants want theatrical associations to include in their repertories.[26]

Flamingants have also endeavored to put a nationalist stamp on already existing organizations. As before the War, they still endeavor to use the University Extension Lectures for propaganda, and not without success. They have also made attempts to enlist the Flemish Academy in the nationalist cause. Although most of the members of this institution are Minimalists, a certain number are Maximalists, and their position in the Academy lends prestige to their political opinions.[27] A similar condition exists in the Annual Flemish Scientific Congresses. At these gatherings physicians, dentists, philologists, economists, historians, writers, and artists come together in order to study and discuss subjects of mutual interest. They are offered an opportunity of becoming better acquainted with one another and of freeing themselves somewhat from French scientific influence. It is quite common during these congresses for Flamingants to take advantage of their opportunities to speak by preaching their doctrines of Flemish nationalism.

Thus far Flemish nationalists have had little success in turning art and music into channels of propaganda. No painter has yet come forward to portray "Flanders broken on the Belgian wheel" nor has any musician composed a symphony of Flanders' sufferings. Today Flemish nationalists go back to Peter Breughel the Elder in order to find an artist who attacked foreign

[26] Concerning Verschaeve see D. Pissens and J. Festraets, *Vlaamsche Weelde*. Ghent: Erasmus. 1925.

[27] Among the Maximalists may be noted Dr. F. Daels and Professor L. Scharpé.

invaders by means of the brush [28] and they remain faithful to Miry's *Flemish Lion* for their national anthem. The only important post-War patriotic composer is Jef van Hoof. His numerous songs [29] have had a certain vogue, but the field is still open for one who can reproduce the nationalist enthusiasm of the people in his scores.

In still another respect Flemish Maximalists have not had much success since the War; they have failed to win the *Willemsfonds* or the *Davidsfonds* to their point of view. These societies, once the leading propagandist agencies of the Flemish movement,[30] have lost much of their influence. The *Willemsfonds* outlived the War crisis and still lingers on. It continues to keep open its loan library at Ghent and occasionally publishes books, but it has dropped to a place of minor importance. The *Davidsfonds* has had a more vigorous existence since the War. Every year it publishes two or three books which are sent gratis to its 13,000 members; it subsidizes about 2,000 libraries; and it contributes to funds for the establishment of Flemish courses at the University of Louvain. Its original importance has diminished, however, for Flemings are now taught to read in public schools and obtain books through ordinary channels.[31]

[28] In his *Massacre of the Innocents* the setting is in Flanders, the Roman soldiers are really Spaniards, and the children are Flemings.

[29] Such as, the *Lions Dance.*

[30] See above, pp. 115-116.

[31] Report of the *Algemeene vergadering van het Davidsfonds* at Louvain, June 26, 1926. Bruges: Excelsior. 1926.

Flemish Post-War Nationalist Literature

Aside from the action of societies and the multitudinous pamphlets and books [32] which comprise Flemish post-War propaganda, a number of literary productions, tinged with Flemish nationalism or expressive of admiration for Flemish life, have appeared since the War. Literature has always played an important part in the Flemish movement and, although Flemish nationalism has now entered the political arena and seeks victory there as well as in the realm of culture, the continuing importance of the literary movement must not be minimized.

One of the outstanding figures of Flanders' post-War literary movement is René de Clercq. He attained considerable importance before 1914 as a lyric poet and as a preacher of social reform. Upon the invasion of Belgium he displayed an ardent Belgian patriotism.[33] Gradually his interests changed and he became the leading poet of Flemish nationalism.[34] Since the War from his exile in Holland he has produced a continuous stream of Flemish poems that place him in the front rank of Flemish national writers.

[32] The most important propagandist books which have appeared since the War are: Alphonse Van de Perre, *The Language Question in Belgium* (London: Richards, 1919); Dr. Frans Daels, *Voor mijn volk in nood* (Ghent: Tspyker, 1923); Liederik (pseudonym), *Vlaanderen's economische zelfstandigheid* (Antwerp: Flandria, 1917); Spectator (pseudonym), *Proeve van een politiek program voor Katholieke nationalisten in Vlaanderen* (Brussels: Gudrun, 1924).

[33] See the sentiment expressed in *De Zware Kroon* (The Heavy Crown), 1915.

[34] See *De Noodhoorn* (The Horn of Alarm), 1917.

Of the same generation as René de Clercq is Cyriel Verschaeve, priest, poet, and dramatist. His ardent Flemish feeling is expressed in nearly all his literary productions, especially in his *Trouw aan Vlaanderen* and *De Artevelden.*[35]

Of a slightly different sort is the literature produced by the younger generation. Immediately after the War the imprisoned Activists produced a number of poems which resound with a deep love of Flanders and hate for Belgium. The *Celbrieven* (Cell Letters) of Wies Moens, *In 't Gevang, MuurKrabbels* (In Prison, Sketches on the Wall) by Noordling, and *Liederen uit de stad en uit de cel* (Poems from the City and from the Cell) by G. Burssens form an important part of post-War Flemish national literature.[36] The sentiments expressed by these writers are echoed in the works of a score of young writers among whom may be mentioned the propagandist Ward Hermans *(Gedichten van liefde en strijd),* the poet Karel Van den Oever *(Verzen uit oorlogstijd),* and the dramatist Anton Van de Velde *(Thijl Ulenspiegel).*[37]

Aside from this avowedly nationalist Flemish literature, there has been a considerable production of non-nationalist Flemish works. They render a service to the Flemish cause, however, for they are objects of pride for the Flemish people and their descriptions of

[35] See above, p. 231.

[36] Joseph Muls, *Driejaarlijksche wedstrijd in de Nederlandsche letterkunde (1918-1920).* Ghent: Volksdrukkerij. 1926. pp. 11-17.

[37] The Flemish press possesses four notable reviews—*Pallieter,* a humorous weekly, *Vlaamsche Arbeid, Dietsche Warande, Ons Volk Ontwaakt, Hooger Leven* (Minimalist), and *Jong Dietschland* (Maximalist).

Flemish things make Flanders ever dearer to their readers. Of such a nature are the works of the two outstanding Flemish novelists, Stijn Streuvels (Frank Lateur) and Felix Timmermans. Stijn Streuvels, a western Gorky, is at his best when picturing the homely life of the Flemish peasant.[38] The remarkable productions of Felix Timmermans are of the same sort. Pallieter is one of the artist Jordaens' Flemish figures in action. *Anne Marie* and the *Christ Child in Flanders* are full of sentimental descriptions of Flemish customs. Aside from their literary contributions to Flemish culture and indirectly to the Flemish movement, both authors are known to be in sympathy with Flamingant aspirations.[39]

From the foregoing pages it should be clear that Flamingants are busily engaged in creating a national Flemish *milieu* for every Fleming and that, if there is anything at all in the doctrine of the environmentalists, there are potential qualities in Flemish post-War propaganda worthy of consideration. It was around the Flemish language that the Flemish movement first started; then Flemish romanticists endeavored to make Flemings conscious of their historical traditions; later Flamingants made a political issue of their demands; and now Flamingants are not only continuing the work of their predecessors but they are also trying to establish among Flemings a community of economic interests, common social concerns and even a distinct political organization.

[38] As in his *Langs de wegen* and *Stille avonden.* See André de Ridder, *La Littérature flamande contemporaine.* p. 59.

[39] Other outstanding authors of the present day are A. Vermeylen, Van de Woestijne, M. Sabbe, E. Claes, Hammenecker, J. Persijn, and L. Baeckelmans.

CHAPTER IX

The International Aspect of the Contemporary Flemish Movement

Pan-Netherlandish Sentiment in Holland

In the first chapter of this study an effort was made to show that the growth of nationalities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been, for the most part, an outcome of the awakening of linguistic groups to a sense of national unity. It is probably correct to say that language was the main factor in the unification of France, Germany, and Italy, and that linguistic and cultural forces account in large measure for the tenacity with which Poles, Serbs, and Czechs clung to the idea of national independence before the War. Undoubtedly those acquainted with the phenomena of nationalism have been struck during the course of this study by similarities between Flemish nationalism and nationalism in other parts of Europe. But it should be remembered that, although there is much in common between the national awakening of the Flemings and that of the Poles, Czechs, or Serbs, there is one outstanding difference—the Flemish movement has not included an entire linguistic group, it has been limited to a fraction of those who speak the Netherlandish language. Nevertheless, as has been intimated on several occasions in the preceding pages, at least a few of the Dutch have taken an interest in Flemish nationalism

and several of the Flemish Maximalists have expressed the desire of uniting Flanders to Holland. In the present chapter we shall endeavor to discover how general this Pan-Netherlandish sentiment is and to point out the place which the Flemish movement holds in international affairs.

There are several reasons why the Flemish movement has failed to awaken the sympathy of the Dutch. In the first place, the historical development of the two peoples has been different ever since their separation in the sixteenth century. After the war with Spain, Holland, as we have seen, became a free and independent state, while Flanders was subjected successively to Spain, Austria, and France. The Dutch Netherlands became one of the wealthiest nations of Europe on account of her foreign trade, while Flanders, cut off by the Dutch themselves from commerce with the outside world, eked out a meager existence by agriculture and textile manufacture. Religiously Holland became largely Protestant, Flanders remained almost wholly Catholic; culturally the Dutch remained true to things Netherlandish, the Flemish bourgeois turned to things French; and patriotically the Dutch and Flemings developed different sets of allegiance. Such traditions were certainly not conducive to a feeling of unity and, when the Great Powers united Belgium and Holland in 1815, the differences between the Dutch and the Flemings were so numerous that the latter joined the Walloons in the Belgian Revolution of 1830. During the nineteenth century *rapprochements* were effected between the intellectuals of Holland and Flanders by the Netherlandish Linguistic and Literary Congresses and by the Pan-Netherlandish League. But despite such

attempts to realize a community of feeling between the intellectuals of Holland and Flanders, the common people of the two countries continued to regard each other with a feeling of hostility.

The antipathy which the lower classes of Flanders still bear toward the Dutch is in part an outgrowth of the anti-Orange feeling of the Revolution of 1830. Strange as it may seem the antagonism of a hundred years ago, nourished by tradition and propaganda, still persists. Manifestations of this feeling are soon discovered by one who mingles with the Flemings. The mere sight of a Dutchman often calls forth a derogatory ejaculation and very frequently a Flemish peasant will use *kaaskop,* meaning a head of cheese, as a synonym for Hollander. For their part the Dutch do not hold the Flemings in very high esteem. They have a tendency to believe that all Flemings are like the reckless, uncouth, easy-going Thijl Uilenspiegel or like the carousing figures in the painting of Breughels, Jordaens, or Rubens. Moreover, they look upon the separation of Flanders from Holland as definitive and when one mentions the fact that there are certain Flemings who desire to be reincorporated in the "motherland," they discourse on the fickleness of their linguistic brethren to the south. The Dutch refuse to take the Flemings seriously.

From a religious point of view Flemings and Dutch are also at odds. Approximately two-thirds of the latter are Protestants and one-third are Catholics, whereas practically all of the former are Catholics. The religious complications which would result if the Flemings and the Dutch should be united in one state immediately suggest themselves. The Protestant ma-

jority of Holland would become a minority and the Catholics would probably secure firm control of the government. For this reason Dutch anti-clericals repudiate all suggestions of union with the Flemings and even frown upon the Flemish movement, which they fear may be looking forward to such a union. On the other hand, Catholic Flemings look askance at the possibility of coming under the sway of Protestants, if for any reason their forces should become divided. They are as anxious as the Protestants to safeguard the interests of their religion.

There is also a gap between the culture of the Dutch and that of the Flemings. Until comparatively recent times the Dutch have not taken an interest in the cultural life of Flanders, nor have the Flemings been concerned with that of Holland. It is a fact that the Flemish movement has been almost exclusively Flemish; Flamingant leaders have lauded Flemish, not Netherlandish, literature, art, and music. This tendency explains in large measure why the Flemish movement has remained limited to the provinces of Flanders.

Then there are economic reasons why the national awakening of the Flemings has been of a local nature. The economic difficulties which would arise if Flanders and Holland should be united may be illustrated from the field of commerce. Ever since the War the ports of Antwerp and Rotterdam have been vying with each other for the position of third largest port in the world and the keenest rivalry has developed between the two cities. If both ports were located in the same country, Antwerp would resent any favors shown to Rotterdam, and *vice-versa*. Since the War there has been, in a sense, a test case of this problem. Belgium desires to

link Antwerp with the Rhine at Ruhrort by a large canal. This would bring to the Belgian port much of the commerce, especially that from Alsace, which now continues down the Rhine to Rotterdam. But such a canal will have to pass through Dutch territory and therefore cannot be built without the consent of Holland. When the question of building a Rhine-Antwerp canal was being discussed, Flamingants were placed in the unpleasant position of either opposing something which would aid their constituents or of approving a project which would be of detriment to their friends the Dutch. The Maximalists chose to oppose the construction of the canal, but the Minimalists generally supported it. The Dutch, on the other hand, and especially the commercial elements of Rotterdam, opposed the plan whole-heartedly and it was largely owing to their opposition that the scheme was finally defeated; the Dutch Parliament refused to ratify the necessary accord primarily because of the pressure brought to bear on it from Rotterdam, although other factors played a part in the decision. The incident is a lucid example of the many complications which would arise if Flemings and Dutch should pool their interests in one political organization.

For these reasons, then, the people of Holland have shown very little interest in claiming the Flemings as their "unredeemed" brethren. The ordinary Dutchman has very little time to study a question that does not pertain to his immediate concerns; Dutch business men believe that they have little to gain by fostering the Flemish movement; and governmental officials are prohibited from meddling in foreign affairs. The newspapers in Holland reflect the general attitude of the

people regarding this question. *De Telegraaf* of Amsterdam, one of the most widely circulated papers in the country, is notoriously pro-French, pro-Belgian, and anti-Flamingant. Its owner resides in Paris and its famous cartoonist, Raemaekers, takes the French point of view on almost every issue. The more serious dailies like the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* and *Het Algemeen Handelsblad* have been content to give extensive but quite objective accounts of Flemish activities. Only here and there are to be found papers which support the Flemish cause as, for example, the *Utrechtsch Dagblad*. On the whole the Dutch press is not enthusiastic about Flemish nationalism. Imbued with the idea of the cultural value of the French language, the Dutch wonder why the Flemings are so recalcitrant about speaking it and why they do not make the most of their opportunities to absorb French culture.

For its part the Dutch government takes an apathetic attitude toward the Flemish movement. It cannot very well support the Flamingants without arousing the hostility of both the Belgian and the French governments, to say nothing of most decidedly roiling the political waters of Europe. Dutch foreign policy is still based on its seventeenth-century formula, *Gallum amicum, non vicinum,* and to this end the friendship of Belgium is considered most useful. After the World War Belgium, flushed with victory and thoughts of recompense, made an attempt to secure a part of Dutch Limburg and Zeeland. At that time the Dutch preached the doctrine of hands off so intensely that now any interference in Belgian affairs would be especially resented. But even if the government of the Netherlands were inclined to aid the Flemish cause, whom would

it support? Would it support Catholic Maximalists, Frontists, Catholic Minimalists, or Socialist Minimalists? Evidently the Flemish movement has not developed to a point where foreign aid can be thrown to advantage behind a strong majority. As the matter stands Holland seems to be well impregnated with the idea of firm neutrality and refuses to become embroiled in Belgium's internal affairs.

But despite the general and official indifference of the Dutch toward the Flemish movement, there are in Holland germs of Pan-Netherlandism [1] and even of irredentism. Up to the time of the World War the number of Dutchmen who sympathized with the aspirations of the Flemish leaders, to say nothing of those who desired the incorporation of Flanders with Holland, was very small indeed. The events of the War and the post-War period, however, have effected a change which is, although very slight, of some significance. The transformation began at the very beginning of the War when Flemish refugees, who counted among their number several outstanding Flamingant leaders, began to acquaint the Dutch with their problems. This was done not only by personal contacts but also by the Flemish press in Holland, especially by *De Vlaamsche Stem* and later by the weekly *Vrij België*. Many of the Dutch learned about the Flemish movement for the first time by such methods and a few intellectuals, who may have had some inkling of what the movement was about, but who had failed to develop a very active interest in it, now became real supporters of Flemish "rights." Upon the conclusion of hostili-

[1] *De Groot Nederlandsche Gedachte* (The Pan-Netherlandish Idea).

ties the comparatively calm refugees returned to Belgium, but their places were taken by the radical Activists. The Dutch then began to receive new information and new opinions concerning the Belgian situation and a certain number of them were converted to the Maximalist point of view.

The advance of Pan-Netherlandish ideas in Holland became apparent during the War by internal strife in the Dutch section of the Pan-Netherlandish League. Up to 1914 almost all the members of this society had been interested in the purely cultural phases of the Flemish movement, but, as the political side of the movement became more important by reason of Activism and German interference, a minority group in the League began to dream of the future union of Flanders to Holland. The majority, however, remained steadfast in the cultural traditions of the organization and successfully repulsed the several attempts which the minority made to win the League to its point of view. The League has maintained up to the present time an official standpoint of neutrality, but it has not been able to restrain its radical members from expressing their opinion.[2]

Many of the radical Pan-Dutchmen thought that their cause was worthy of a more forceful organization than the Pan-Netherlandish League, and therefore in June, 1917 they formed the *Dietsche Bond* (Pan-Netherlandish Union).[3] The second article of this

[2] For confirmation of this neutrality see the article by Omer Wattez, "Vlaanderen" in the *Gedenkboek van het Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond bij gelegenheid van zijn 25-jarig bestaan.* Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek. 1923. pp. 28, 227-245.

[3] *Dietsch* is used as a synonym for *Groot-Nederlandsch;* it should not be confused with *Duitsch* which means German.

body's constitution recognizes Pan-Netherlandism as its only aim and rejects from membership those who would obscure the main issue by irrelevant matters. Article three is even more explicit:

"The Pan-Netherlandish Union stands for:

"a. Emphasis on the fact that the Netherlandish race (including all the members of the Netherlandish linguistic groups, those in Holland, Belgian Flanders, French Flanders, the Dutch East and West Indies, as well as other Dutchmen all over the world) form among the other peoples of the world a separate community based on a common civilization and that the preservation and development of Netherlandish civilization and the salient well being of the Netherlandish race as a whole is a life interest for each individual group;

"b. The awakening of national self-respect and self-consciousness in each of the individual groups for the purpose of insuring in this way the preservation of the Netherlandish character and of firmly establishing a distinct Netherlandish civilization. . . ." [4]

Having thus candidly stated its program, this group, composed for the most part of publicists, journalists, Activists, teachers, and lawyers, proceeded to organize its propaganda. A review, *De Dietsche Gedachte,* was founded in 1926; speakers were sent about the country to present the Union's views to the masses; and members were delegated to attend the annual *Begroetingsdag* (day of greeting), when Maximalists of Belgium unite with Activists in Holland to renew their faith in an independent Flanders.[5]

[4] *Standregelen van den Dietschen Bond.* Utrecht, 1919.

[5] The custom of holding a *Begroetingsdag* was begun in 1922. Delegates of the Union did not begin to attend until 1926.

In addition to the Pan-Netherlandish League and the Pan-Netherlandish Union, there is also the *Dietsche Studenten Verbond* (Pan-Netherlandish Students' League), an organization devoted to the propagation of the "Great Netherlandish Idea" among students. As a class, Dutch students form the strongest Pan-Netherlandish group in Holland; their ardor is not dampened by business interests or by political expediency. The Pan-Netherlandish Students' League furnishes students with information about the Flemish movement, arouses their enthusiasm for Pan-Netherlandism, and holds in conjunction with Flemish students annual Pan-Netherlandish Student Congresses.[6]

Pan-Netherlandish thought is sponsored not only by societies but also by individual propagandists. Perhaps the most active of such persons is Dr. P. Geyl, Professor of Dutch history at the University of London. By means of his numerous lectures and his writings he has won a considerable following in his homeland (Holland) as well as in England. He has given a good survey of Pan-Netherlandism and what it imports in his *De Groot Nederlandsche Gedachte.*[7]

Besides Professor Geyl there are a score of persons whom one might suggest as being Pan-Netherlandish propagandists. For instance, one might name W. G. L. Van Es whose activity is similar to that of Dr. Geyl's but whose ideas are more advanced;[8] L. Simons, head

[6] *Groot Nederlandsch Studenten Congressen.*

[7] Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink & Zoon. 1925. An abbreviated edition is available in an English translation. See also P. Geyl, "Vlaanderen en Nederland," *Haagsch Maandblad.* October, 1924. p. 440.

[8] He has presented the questions at stake in his *Holland-België.* Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink & Zoon. 1926.

of one of the largest publishing houses in Holland;[9] P. W. De Koning, President of the Pan-Netherlandish Union; C. Gerretson, a pampheteer;[10] and B. Nierstrasz, author of *Nederland en België*.[11] The main point in their propaganda is not political irredentism in the Italian sense, but "cultural irredentism" somewhat of the sort which Germany has displayed since the World War. That is, anxiety is shown for Netherlandish culture in Flanders and attacks are made on all those forces, political, economic, or purely cultural, which hinder its development. An active interest is thus taken in Belgian internal politics and Flamingant measures are supported whenever possible. But in all the propaganda there is no bellicose jingoism for "redeeming" Flanders by force of arms.

Pan-Netherlandism and French Flanders

If Pan-Netherlandism is carried to its logical conclusions, it must at least interest itself in French Flanders. This district has little by little become largely French in language and culture; French is the official language of the schools and of the government, is used almost exclusively by the bourgeoisie, and predominates in the cities and in most of the country districts. Flemish, however, reigns supreme in the rural sections of that portion of French Flanders which lies northeast of a line running south from Dunkirk to Hazebrouck and then slightly northeast to the Belgian

[9] L. Simons, *Nederland, België, Vlaanderen.* Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek. 1924.

[10] G. Gossaert (pseudonyn for C. Gerretson) *De Internationale beteekenis der Vlaamsche beweging.* Utrecht: Ruys, 1918.

[11] The Hague: Blommendaal. 1926.

frontier.[12] Flemish is also spoken by isolated groups composed either of natives or of Flemish immigrants in the district around Lille. Gustav Groeber in his *Grundriss der Romanischen Philologie*[13] calculated that in 1902 there were 176,860 people in France whose mother tongue was Flemish, but there are no official French statistics to corroborate his estimate. At all events one corner of French Flanders is legitimate ground for the propaganda of those who would keep the Flemish language alive. Before the War August Borms, the Activist leader, made several sallies to French Flanders in an effort to interest the people there in things Netherlandish. Of late years the Pan-Netherlandish League and enthusiastic Flamingants from Belgium have endeavored to awaken a Flemish sentiment and to start a Flemish cultural revival among their linguistic brethren in France.

Their attempts have not been entirely without results. After the War the Flemish Committee of France, a body which had been formed in 1853 for "Mother tongue and Fatherland," was reorganized under the direction of Canon Looten of the Catholic University of Lille. Under its patronage a group of young Catholic men formed the Flemish Union of France for the purpose of stimulating interest in Flemish literature and in the Netherlandish language. In addition to this society a number of French Flemings who were interested in the decentralization of the French govern-

[12] This Flemish is badly mixed with French expressions and one may hear such sentences as the following: *"Madame, dans ce korf-ci il y a suukerboontjes en dans ce korf-la snijboontjes."*

[13] Strasbourg: Trübner. 1902. v. II, p. 570. See also the linguistic map of France at the end of this volume.

mental system organized a publishing house at Lille to carry on Flemish and political propaganda. A review, *Le Mercure de Flandre,* directed by Valentin Bresle, was founded and several books have been published of which the most successful has been G. Blachon's, *Pourquoi j'aime la Flandre,* a diatribe against the highly centralized, French administration. There have been still other indications of an interest in things Flemish in French Flanders. Two regionalist organs, *Le Beffroi de Flandre* and *De Vlaamsche Stemme in Vrankryk,* have been founded; courses in Netherlandish language and literature have been begun at the Catholic University of Lille; and the French state has decreed [14] that Flemish may be studied as a foreign language in secondary schools. There seems to be plenty of evidence that the seeds of a Flemish movement have been sown in France.[15]

Germany and the Flemish Movement

Pan-Netherlandism has thus far not become confounded in fact with Pan-Germanism, although many persons are inclined to confuse the two in their own minds. In our discussion of the background of Activism it was made clear that outside the Pan-German League few Germans had any designs on Flanders, that fewer still took any interest in the Flemish move-

[14] July 23, 1926.

[15] A. Hans, "Onze stamgenooten in Frankrijk," *Gedenkboek van het Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond.* pp. 245-260.

W. J. L. Van Es, *Het Fransche Vlaanderen.* Apeldoorn: Dixon & Co. 1918.

Jan Van de Woestijne, "De Dageraad eener hergeboorte" in *Ons Volk.* January 23, 1927.

ment and that Flemings, for their part, sought no aid from across the Rhine.[16] The War, however, altered matters; it gave the Germans a chance to profit by the Flemish movement and they showed little reticence about using it to their own advantage. The War also gave Flamingants an opportunity to realize some of their demands by collaborating with the Germans. Nevertheless, the German attitude toward the Flemish movement from 1914 to 1918 was not a nationalist one; nor was it an irredentist one; practically every move which was made had an air about it of military expediency or of mere imperialism. For their part, the majority of the Flamingants refused to join with the Germans in the realization of Flemish reforms, but even those who did coöperate with them, the Activists, continually insisted by word and by deed that they were acting for the greater glory of the Netherlandish, not of the German, nationality. As was natural, the interests which were awakened and the relationships which were established during the War were not immediately broken after the cessation of hostilities. Some of the Germans who played important rôles in Flanders from 1914 to 1918 have maintained their interest in the Flemish movement [17] and several of the Activists have kept up hopes of solving the Flemish problem by means of German assistance. German

[16] A letter sent by the *Vlaamsche Volksraad* to the Pan-German League, May 16, 1897 and a pamphlet of the same society published in October, 1914 make this point clear. See also Henri Pirenne, *La Belgique et la guerre.* p. 210.

[17] The case of Dr. P. Oswald is to the point. He was connected with the German civil administration in Flanders during the War. Since 1918 he has written numerous articles concerning Flanders.

propaganda in Flanders and Flemish propaganda in Germany are, however, very slight; a few Activists who settled at Göttingen and a certain number of Germans who held official positions in Flanders during the War write occasional Flamingant articles for the German press, but, as far as is known, neither German money nor German prestige is being used to advance the Flemish cause. The Flemish movement has always been and still is Netherlandish and not German.

Wallonia and the Flemish Movement

Whereas Flanders' neighbors to the north have been inclined to regard the Flemish movement with indifference or at the most with mild approval, her neighbors to the south have looked upon it with unconcealed hostility; both the Walloons and the French are unequivocally opposed to it. The majority of Walloons frankly admit that they fail to understand the Flamingants; they feel that they have already made too many linguistic concessions; and they believe that the successes of the Flemish movement are placing then in a position of linguistic inferiority before the law. It was because of such fears that they founded the Walloon Assembly and began to publish *La Défense Wallonne,* agents of defense against Flemish propaganda. The Walloons wish to arrest the further advance of the Flemish movement and they predict an ominous future for Belgium if they fail. Some have threatened secession from Belgium and union with France. During the War there were even those who tried to carry out this threat by collaborating with the

Germans in the division of Belgium.[18] Although the number of Walloons who at the present time wish to alter the form of the Belgian state is very small, their very existence is worthy of our notice. One of their number, Raymond Colleye, desires the division of Belgium along linguistic lines and the creation of a dual monarchy.[19] He is convinced that the aims of the Flemish Maximalists coincide with the best interests of Wallonia and so has made his peace with the Frontists and is a regular contributor to their organ, *De Schelde*. Colleye's position is, however, unique; the mass of Walloons frown upon the Flemish movement and protest against its successes.

France and the Flemish Movement

Among the French there is practically no sympathy for the Flemish movement; certainly there is no sentiment among them comparable to the feeling which exists for Poland, Czecho-Slovakia, or Jugo-Slavia. On the whole, the French center all their interest in Belgium on the French part and seldom consider the Flemish section. Moreover, they receive whatever information they may have concerning the Flemish movement from Walloon or Fransquillon sources, from the writings of Professor Henri Pirenne and other opponents of Flemish nationalism, and, as a consequence, their opinions are usually the same as those of their teachers. Then, too, France has a special interest in seeing Belgium continue in its present form, for that

[18] These persons were known as Walloon Activists.

[19] Raymond Colleye, *Projet de revision de la constitution belge par le fédéralisme.* Brussels: L'Opinion Wallonne. 1926.

state serves as a buffer *par excellence* against attacks from the north. The inestimable value of Belgian friendship was made clear in 1914 and soon after the signing of peace France made a military alliance with Belgium in order to guarantee the union of French and Belgian arms in case of another conflict.[20] And finally France has an economic interest in maintaining the *status quo* in Belgium. The port of Antwerp is of great importance to French commerce, especially to that of Alsace. So important is it in fact that the French have suppressed the *surtaxes d'entrepot et d'origine* on goods arriving at Antwerp.[21] For all these reasons, then, France must keep in the good graces of Belgium, a thing which would be very difficult, if not impossible, if the Flemish Maximalists had their way. Hence, the French not only remain hostile to Flemish nationalism, but also carry on considerable propaganda in their own behalf among the people of Belgium. The Flemings accuse them of subsidizing secretly such pro-French Belgian papers as *La Nation Belge,* a charge which, however, has not been proved, and of supporting a number of propagandist societies. There are in Belgium numerous branches of *L'Alliance Française, L'Association pour l'Extension de la Culture et de la Langue Française,* and, the strongest of all, *Les Amitiés Françaises,* created in 1909 by the Belgian Jennissen of Liége. Nor should one forget in this con-

[20] Military accord of 1920. *Receuil des traités et engagements internationaux enregistrés par le secretariat de la Société des Nations.* v. II, p. 128. There are also secret provisions not included in this text.

[21] For a discussion of this question see L. Gueneau, "L'Utilisation du port d'Anvers et la collaboration franco-belge," *Revue Economique Internationale.* October, 1926. pp. 124-147.

nection the existence of *Le Comité de l'Entente Franco-Belge,* founded in 1915 by Paul Deschanel, later President of the French Republic. He was the first president of *Le Comité,* a position which he relinquished at the time of his election as President of the French Republic to Raoul Peret, former president of the French Chamber of Deputies and former Minister of Finance. These societies are all active agents of French interests in Belgium and do much to maintain friendly relations between the two countries.

The Attitude of Great Britain and of the United States Towards the Flemish Movement

Other foreign states have shown little interest in Belgium's internal affairs and surely little concern in the Flemish movement. Professor P. Geyl of the University of London has endeavored to show that England would benefit by supporting the Flemish cause; by so doing she could undermine French influence in Belgium and strengthen her commercial and strategic position at Antwerp. Thus far his arguments along this line have not been received with real warmth; his main success has been to attract the attention of the English to the "oppressed nationality" across the Channel. But even in this respect one could hardly say that the English are very enthusiastic about Flemish nationalism; it is by no means a lively issue among them. The same may be said for Americans, few of whom know there is a Flemish movement. An exception should be made, however, in respect of the Flemish immigrants located in Chicago and Detroit. Those of the latter city have kept alive a certain consciousness of Flemish national-

ism. A Flemish newspaper of Detroit, *Gazette van Detroit,* prints lengthy accounts of events concerning the Flemish movement. Ever mindful of the part Irish-Americans played in the Irish question and especially of the sums that Charles Parnell brought back to Ireland from a land seemingly overflowing with wealth, Flemings are ever on the alert to win the sympathy of Flemish-Americans. Occasionally a Fleming will arrive from Flanders with pamphlets and papers and sometimes lantern slides with which he is expected to reap a golden harvest. Thus far little aid has come from the Flemings of Detroit who are not particularly wealthy and who number only a few thousand. Flamingants can hardly expect any real help from America, at least not in the near future.

Thus we come to the close of our study of the Flemish movement. We have traced the awakening of the Flemings to a sense of their nationality from the very meager beginnings in the eighteenth century, when an obscure lawyer dared to suggest that the Netherlandish language was worthy of admiration, to the more advanced state of the present day when Flemish Maximalists demand the independence of Flanders. We have noted all the intermediate steps: the period when Romanticists were busily engaged in popularizing the glories of Flanders' past and in purifying the Flemish language; the period when Flamingants sought linguistic reforms by means of political action; and the period of the World War when certain radical Flemings coöperated with the Germans in attempting to destroy the state of Belgium. What will be the future of the Flemish movement, the historian should not attempt to

prophesy. He may content himself with a reference to the last lines of De Coster's *Ulenspiegel;*

"'How can one bury me,' said Ulenspiegel, 'the spirit, or Nele, the heart of Mother Flanders? She may sleep, but die, never!'

"And so he departed with her at his side and sang as he went his sixth song; where he will sing his last no one knows."

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No attempt has been made in compiling this bibliography to include every book, pamphlet, or article which treats of the Flemish movement. To do this would be to hide in a maze of comparatively unimportant titles the names of really significant works. The following list purposes to be of such a nature that it will be an aid to those who desire to know more about the Flemish question. Because of the complexity of the subject, it has been thought wise to group the books topically. The number of cases in which one book is of use for more than a single topic is so small that titles have been cited only once. The names of Flemish magazines and newspapers have been omitted purposefully. They have been mentioned in the text and will be found in the index.

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